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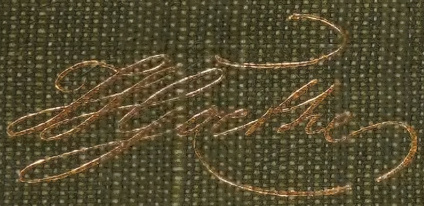

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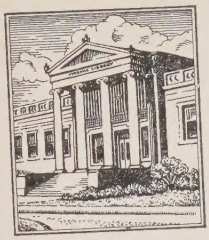

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## The LIFE OF GOETHE

*By*

***Albert Bielschowsky, Ph.D.***

**Three volumes, 8vo, Illustrated**

1. From Birth to the Return from Italy, 1749-1788
2. From the Italian Journey to the Wars of Liberation, 1788-1815
3. From the Congress of Vienna to the Poet's Death, 1815-1832

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**G.P. Putnam's Sons**

New York London

*Goethe in his 30th. year*
*from a portrait by May*
*in the possession of the Baron von Cotta, Stuttgart.*

# THE LIFE OF GOETHE

BY

ALBERT BIELSCHOWSKY, PH.D.

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN

BY

WILLIAM A. COOPER, A.M.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF GERMAN, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME I

1749–1788

FROM BIRTH TO THE RETURN FROM ITALY

ILLUSTRATED

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE standard biography of Goethe, and the most popular biography of any man written in Modern German, is herewith offered in translation to the English-reading public. It is the work of an eminent scholar, who devoted practically the whole of his life to the one purpose of erecting a worthy monument to the greatest poet of his country, and one of the greatest in the history of the world.

Albert Bielschowsky was born in Namslau, Silesia, on the 3rd day of January, 1847. After receiving his doctor's degree in classical philology, he followed the profession of teaching for sixteen years. In 1886 he moved to Berlin in order to enjoy the larger library facilities of the Prussian capital. Owing to a chronic illness with which he became afflicted, the Government relieved him of the exacting duties of his profession, and this enabled him to devote the last ten years of his life wholly to his biography of Goethe. He died on the 21st day of October, 1902.

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The first volume of his *Goethe, sein Leben und seine Werke* had appeared in 1895. The second and last volume was so nearly completed before his death that it was an easy matter for others who were familiar with his method and aims to finish it. It was published in 1903. As there is a great difference in the size of the two volumes, and the whole work divides very naturally into three parts of approximately equal length, it has been decided to publish the translation in three volumes, reserving the last two chapters of Volume I. of the original for the beginning of Volume II. of the translation. A statement as to what was



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added by others to Bielschowsky's manuscript will therefore appear in the preface to the third volume of this translation.

Of biographers of Goethe there had been no lack. Among the most important earlier ones were Viehoff (1847–9), Schäfer (1851), Lewes (1855), and Prutz (1856). For a period of nearly twenty years (1856–74) there were none. Goedeke (1874) began a new epoch, and was followed by Grimm (1877), Düntzer (1880), Sime (1888), Prem (1893), Wolff, Meyer, Heinemann, and Bielschowsky (all in 1895), and Witkowsky (1899).

For forty years the Germans were obliged to confess that the most popular life of Goethe had been written by Lewes, an Englishman. Now critics are unanimous in declaring that Bielschowsky's *Goethe* not only contains the best features of the others, but has in addition many merits peculiarly its own, so that it is not one of many biographies, —it is *the* biography of the poet. This opinion is most substantially corroborated by the number of editions the work has experienced.

In his preface to the first volume Bielschowsky said that it was his purpose to write a new biography of Goethe, taking into account the abundant material made accessible by the opening of the Goethearchiv, and by the discoveries of the last generation of scholars. Choice of material and manner of treatment were determined by his desire to appeal to the general reader. Hence his account of the poet's life is more detailed than would have been necessary if he had been writing for specialists only. He took as his motto Goethe's words to Heinrich Meyer (February 8, 1796): "All the pragmatic characterisations of biographers are of little value, compared with the naïve details of a great life." These words he considered doubly significant in this case, inasmuch as the details reveal to us, not alone the man, but the poet as well. Considering Goethe a type of ideal man, he said further that an understanding of Goethe as a man would lead to a clearer understanding of mankind in general.

It will be observed that Bielschowsky was very conservative with respect to the poet's autobiographical writings. He said that the more he had studied the historical sources and the new facts brought to light, the more he had been convinced of the excellence of the poet's memory, the truthfulness of his utterances, and the correctness of his judgments concerning his own past. He differed from the poet's statements only when forced to do so by documentary evidence, or by strong proof.

His discussions of Goethe's writings are based on the redactions of greatest historical value. In the case of *Götz* it is the second, of *Werther* the first, of *Iphigenie* the last, etc. His accounts of the Swiss journey of 1779 and the Italian journey are based, not on the letters as edited for publication by the poet, but on the original letters and journals. The orthography and punctuation of the passages cited have, with few exceptions, been modernised. The only changes which the translator has taken the liberty to make in the text are the substitution of the opening sentence of Chapter I. for two paragraphs, and a slight alteration in the wording of the paragraph referring to Faustina in Chapter XXVI. The footnotes signed "C." are inserted by the translator.

Bielschowsky's *Goethe* is characterised by ease of comprehension, artistic style, and scientific depth. His clearness in the analysis of characters and in the presentation of fundamental ideas is unsurpassed. No other biographer has ever traced the intimate relation between Goethe's personal experiences and his literary creations with such fine appreciation and such warm sympathy. The chief charm of his work, however, and what has doubtless contributed more than anything else to its phenomenal popularity, is his predominant use of continuous narrative, painting one complete word-picture after another, without stopping to turn aside and argue, or to show us the straw out of which he has threshed his wheat. One familiar with Goethe's letters, journals, and poetical writings is constantly pleased and surprised at the consummate skill with which Bielschowsky

has woven into his narrative the poet's own words and expressions. But not only does the language recall so vividly the language of Goethe; its spirit, too, is thoroughly saturated with the spirit of the poet. One feels almost as if Goethe had sat at Bielschowsky's elbow and dictated to him. His was the first biography to give us a whole Goethe, the writer, the thinker, the statesman, the man, and this makes it a handbook that will have its permanent place beside the poet's own writings.

It has been thought that a translation of this work would be welcome to the many students and admirers of Goethe who are unable to read it in the original. The verse cited has been given in the original for the enjoyment of those who read German; for the benefit of others a translation, usually an attempt at verse preserving the rhymes and rhythm of the original, is given in a note at the bottom of the page.

The translator wishes here to make acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Professor Julius Goebel, who secured for him the authorisation of the author's widow and the German publisher to make this translation. Dr. Goebel's criticism of the manuscript of this volume has been of great value to the writer, and is reflected in some of the footnotes, as well as in certain passages of the text. To Professor B. O. Foster the writer is under great obligations for many valuable criticisms and suggestions, and for generous assistance in reading the proof. Professor G. J. Peirce has also made some useful suggestions, and has aided in the proof-reading. To these friends the translator takes this opportunity of expressing his heartiest thanks.

W. A. C.

Stanford University.

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# The Life of Goethe

# The Life of Goethe

## INTRODUCTION

Goethe the most human of men—Difficulty of understanding him—Perfect amalgamation of all his faculties—The seeming contradictions in his nature—First half of his life spent in establishing harmony among all his powers—His tendency toward the good—Extreme sensitiveness—His life the greatest of his works.

WIELAND, wishing to characterise his most prominent contemporaries, called Klopstock the most poetical, Herder the most scholarly, Lavater the most Christian, and Goethe the most human of men.

Wieland made the other remarkable statement, that Goethe was misunderstood because so few are capable of forming a correct conception of such a man. Why is it so difficult to form an estimate of this most human of men? It is certainly not because of the greatness of his mental faculties; for poetry, hero-worship, and the history of religion prove that the ordinary mortal has sufficient talent for grasping such ideals, although not much given to exercising it on contemporaries. It was hardly Goethe's inward greatness alone that Wieland, and others whose judgment coincided with his, had in mind. They were thinking, rather, of the complete harmony of his nature.

Goethe was the most human of all men, because he had been endowed with a portion of everything human. His figure was typical in its mould, the very ideal of perfect man. Hence it was that all who came in touch with him had the

feeling that they had never before seen such a complete man.

There may have been others of clearer understanding, of greater energy, of deeper feelings, or of more vivid imagination, but it is quite certain that there never was an individual in whom all these faculties were united in such striking proportions. And, moreover, there has rarely been an individual of such highly developed powers of soul, whose physical life has so fully retained its independence and has so thoroughly permeated the spiritual. This wonderfully perfect amalgamation of Goethe's nature elevates it to the rank of the extraordinary, and, at the same time, accounts for its seemingly contradictory manifestations. But it is this seeming contradictoriness [1] that has made it so difficult for most people to obtain a correct and adequate idea of him.

He observes colour refractions like a physicist, examines bones and ligaments like an anatomist, and comments on bankrupt law like a jurist. Gifted with unusual clearness in the comprehension and analysis of men and things, his early appearance on the stage of action is marked by the wisdom and experience of a man of the world and a diplomat. And yet this same man writes poetry overflowing with imagination, goes about in the real world absorbed in dreams, sees many things and many people, not as they are, but in the light of his own fancy, is frequently incapable of making out a clear understanding of objects and their mutual relations, and stands in the midst of human activities a naïve and often helpless child. This man at one time grasps the world in the warm embrace of a Faust and again he spurns it with the annihilating contempt of a Mephistopheles.

Like a plant he is influenced by wind and weather, but at times is wholly indifferent to them. He cordially loves life because of the esthetic enjoyment in influential existence, and yet he rides into a storm of bullets merely to know the terror of battle. He is the most faithful, sincere, and sacrificing friend, the most ardent and devoted

lover, and yet in a fit of passion he can bitterly offend a friend and even the woman he loves. He, who, in the words of Herder, "was a man in every step of his life," whom Lavater and Knebel worshipped as a hero, and of whom even the hardened soul of Napoleon was compelled to exclaim, "*Voilà un homme*," is at times hazardously indulgent to the wishes and pleadings of his own heart, allowing himself to drift instead of steering, and is inclined to that tenderness, always bordering on tears, which Schiller fittingly designates "femininity of feeling." Even though his spirit, stripped of all earthly weight, soars in regions beyond the realm of sense, still he has his feet firmly fixed on the earth, and enjoys every little sensual pleasure, even if it be but the plums and cakes which Marianne von Willemer sends him from home. The extreme delicacy and infallibility of his taste in art criticism characterises in equal measure his judgment of Rhenish and Burgundian wines. A pronounced northern and Germanic [2] nature, passionately fond of skating, used to bathing in winter in the cold waters of the Ilm, eager to take long winter walks in the Harz Mountains and over the glaciers of Switzerland, the author of such specifically northern and Germanic creations as *Götz*, *Faust*, *Hermann und Dorothea*, and of such mystic, spectre ballads as *Der Erlkönig*, *Der Totentanz*, *Der untreue Knabe*, and *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*, he feels, beneath the clear sky and in the soft air of Italy, surrounded by the works of classic and Renaissance art, as if it were his native land, from which he has long been exiled; and yet even in the Borghese gardens, he has enough of his northern nature left to write that most fantastic of scenes, *Die Hexenküche*. Modern through and through, in fact, a son of the future in many respects, he feels, on the other hand, so thoroughly antique that he thinks he must have experienced a previous existence in the reign of Hadrian.[3] Though always insistent in his search after clearness, he delights in mysticism, introduces an indefinable demonic element into his world-system, is inclined to believe in the transmigration of souls, and is easily influenced by

premonitions, prognostics, omens, and superstitions. This man, of matchless gentleness and patience, ordinarily, could, on occasion, be seized by such a passion that he would gnash his teeth and stamp his foot. He could be calm or violently excited; bubble over with good cheer or be wrapped in the gloom of melancholy; feel perfectly confident and self-assured or torture himself with scepticism. As an *Übermensch* he sometimes felt the strength to dash a world to pieces, and at other times was so weak and faint-hearted as to be annoyed by a pebble in his path.

These several inconsistencies are manifested according as one or another faculty of his soul has the upper hand, or the same faculty is employed with the whole weight of its power in this or in that direction, or his senses assert their rights over his spiritual nature, or his spirit overrides his senses. It may be said that half of Goethe's life was gone before he succeeded in adjusting an equilibrium between his body and spirit and establishing a just balance among his various mental faculties, so as to avoid serious disturbances in his inner and outer life. So fortunately, however, was this human being constituted by nature, that in every faculty of his soul the tendency toward the positive, the good, and the wholesome, both for himself and the world, infinitely outweighed every other tendency, so that even in times of struggle he never injured himself or the world permanently, but, on the contrary, usually advanced from victory to victory and in the end proved himself to be a benefactor. Hence those who knew him more intimately never reached the point when, because of his temporary one-sidedness and excesses, they were unable to make him out; they felt as Knebel, who said of his moral character, "I know very well he is not always amiable; he has repulsive sides, as I know well from experience. But sum him up and the man's totality is infinitely good." Or their opinion of his morals *and* intellect coincided with Herder's: "He has a clear, universal intellect, most genuine and most profound feelings, and the greatest purity of heart."

There is no great gift in this world which is not at the

same time a burden to its possessor. Goethe's life was eminently rich in this experience; he suffered sorely under the burden of his great natural gifts. Because of his excessive sensitiveness, his straightforwardness, and his goodness and purity of heart, he was deeply offended by any form of perversity, impurity, or misery, his glowing imagination even picturing to him enmity and evil where none existed, and, furthered by his passionate energy, magnifying every unpleasant circumstance until it became unbearable. At such times he raged at himself and others, but a moment later, when he became conscious of his error, he was painfully grieved over the wrong he had done. He even went to further extremes. Grateful as he was to the gods that his quick and versatile genius could "split a day into a million parts and transform it into a miniature eternity," still it was no small affliction for him to harbour in his mind this pandemonium of invisible spirits without being able to cultivate each of them as he ought. Even a quiet, innocent pleasure could stir his sensitive soul to its very depths; he could be brought to tears by a happy poetical invention [4]; a scientific discovery would send a thrill through every fibre of his being; and the beauty of a scene in Calderon's *Principe Constante* excited him to such a pitch that he stopped short and threw down the book with the impetuosity of a child.*

Only a man thus constituted could remark in his old age, that it had been his lot to bear a succession of joys and sorrows, either of which, without the other, might have put an end to his life.†

His happiness was never more than half complete because of his longing for something different, something higher, in the very moment when his former desires were being realised. He shared this feeling with all other men whose minds transcend the dulness of the common Philistine. But in his peculiar mental makeup this feeling was

* The reading referred to occurred in March, 1807. Cf. *Weimar's Album*, 193.

† Letter to Rauch, October 21, 1827.

especially keen and annoying, producing an example of Faust's ideal of a great life:

> Im Weiterſchreiten find' er Qual und Glück,
> Er! unbefriedigt jeden Augenblick.*

Those who saw about his personality the rich halo of innumerable colours regarded the poetic radiations as only a small part of its splendour, and considered the man greater than the poet, and his life better than his poetry. And we, too, after the many intervening years, endeavouring by study and imagination to reproduce in our own minds Goethe's great personality, are impressed with the same idea. To us the most valuable, most attractive, most wonderful of all his works is his life. But it would be a mistake for us to think that it was the product of conscious art. If it is true of his poetical works that they owe their most essential character to inexplicable, unconscious impulses, it is true in a still greater measure of his life. To be sure, he sought early in life, though all but in vain,[5] to overcome the supremacy of instinct (*Dumpfheit*), of which he was conscious in his life and actions, and to order and shape his further career in accordance with certain definite purposes. It was not until middle life that he was sure even of his chief aim. When this was settled, his active control was scarcely anything more than a negative one, consisting in warding off everything that might cause him to swerve from his due course. Otherwise he yielded to his dominant instincts as heretofore. Fritz Jacobi's judgment of him at the age of twenty-five is, on the whole, true of him at all periods of his life:

"Goethe is as one possessed, and almost never has any choice as to what he shall do. It takes only an hour in his presence to convince one of the utter folly of expecting him to think or act otherwise than he does. By this I do not

* In marching onwards, bliss and torment find,
Though every moment, with unsated mind.
*Taylor's Translation.*

mean that there is no room for improving his life esthetically and morally; but such a thing is possible only in the natural order of development, just as the flower unfolds, the seed ripens, the tree towers aloft and spreads out its mighty branches."

# I

## HOME AND FAMILY

**Birth of the poet—Social and political conditions in Frankfort—Advantages of the imperial city—Goethe's ancestors—His parents.**

JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE was born in Frankfort-on-the-Main, on the 28th day of August, 1749.

His native city, or, as the people of Frankfort expressed themselves in those days, his "fatherland," [6] was not a very cheerful place. Numbering but little over thirty thousand [7] souls, Frankfort was still, both in its inner and its outer life, in the galling bonds and cramped confinement of the Middle Ages. Moat, rampart, and walls enclosed a tangled confusion of crooked streets, where yet other walls of monasteries and castellated mansions arose like fortresses within a fortress and intensified the gloomy aspect of the city. The inhabitants still clung to the old rigid class distinctions: at the bottom of the scale a great mass almost without legal protection; next the guilds; then the merchants and doctors; and, at the top, the patricians, the nobility. Each class was subdivided into manifold grades. Even the nobility was split up into two factions, upholding respectively the house of Limpurg and that of Frauenstein. The social and political structure of Frankfort resembled, accordingly, a tower broad at the base and growing narrower as it rose, each separate story divided into numerous cages, through the gratings of which it was almost impossible to pass. Those who were not separated by birth, position, or occupation were sundered by religious differences. The major portion of the population was

Lutheran, but no inconsiderable numbers belonged to the Reformed, Catholic, and Jewish faiths. That the Jews were allowed no civic influence was a matter of course in a German city of the eighteenth century. But the Catholics and the Reformed were also utterly excluded from participation in the government and were often compelled to suffer intensely under Lutheran domination. Furthermore, the members of the different classes [8] and different religious societies became by their own volition slaves of their opinions, habits, and customs, a thraldom from which even strong and courageous minds in the upper classes did not find it easy to liberate themselves.

But Frankfort at that time suffered no more than the majority of German cities under all this narrowness and oppression. On the other hand, it possessed a number of advantages which raised it above many of them. By virtue of its favoured situation at the gateway of Middle and Upper Germany, it was a lively centre of domestic and foreign trade. Great annual fairs at Easter and Michaelmas assembled within its precincts merchants from Western and Central Germany and from regions far beyond. Besides, it was at all times a stopping-place for all sorts of travellers. Both Voltaire and the King of Prussia were seen within its walls. Young Englishmen, too, and Frenchmen who wished to learn the German language were even then to be found there. Thanks to its situation it was, further, the natural meeting-place for the Assembly of the District of the Upper Rhine, and if the western districts, Franconia, Swabia, the Upper Rhine, the Electorate of the Rhine, and Westphalia, had any matter for common consultation, Frankfort was the most convenient place of meeting. Furthermore, the imperial commissions, which had many a dispute to settle among the hundreds of lords, spiritual and temporal, along the Rhine, were wont to hold their sessions here. Many of the German princes, accordingly, and especially those of the neighbouring states, maintained here permanent representatives. Finally, Frankfort was historically a favoured city. As the seat

of the election and coronation of the German emperors, it was frequently the scene of a gorgeous pageant.

For young Goethe it was an especial advantage to be born in the free city. In that period of limitations only those who belonged to the ruling classes enjoyed an unrestricted freedom of movement and breadth of horizon. In a monarchy Goethe would have been excluded from this liberty. In the Frankfort republic, however, he belonged to the ruling class and hence enjoyed the rights, amenities, and favours which in a monarchy are vouchsafed only to princes.

His maternal grandfather, Johann Wolfgang Textor, scion of a South German family of jurists, had been at the time of the poet's birth for two years in possession of the highest dignity in the city, an appointment for life to the office of chief magistrate of the imperial city. He filled this office with great ability and conscientiousness until his seventy-seventh year (1770), when he resigned on account of his age. In his youth, fond of life and the society of women, he always remained kindly, but became a serious man, of few words and strict self-control. The reverence which the grandson felt for his grandfather, whose life was so punctilious, so placid, so faithfully devoted to duty, was rendered complete by the fact that the gift of prophecy was ascribed to him. It must have exerted a determining influence upon young Goethe to see his aged grandfather towering above his fellow-citizens in experience and business ability as well as in liberality of thought. When, in the year 1736, the city council refused to grant a sick soldier of the Reformed Church his request for the consolation of a minister of his own faith, he remarked in his record: "*Sat quidem orthodoxe juxta opinionem vulgi, sed contra naturalem æquitatem et charitatem.*" *

The wife of the chief magistrate was a daughter of Attorney Lindheimer of the Imperial Chamber, but a woman of no personal prominence. She seems to have

* "Quite orthodox according to the opinion of the masses, but contrary to natural justice and charity."—Cf. *Ber. d. FDH., N. F.*, 7, 204.

been a good housewife, who cared well for her husband and five children.

While Goethe on his mother's side sprang from a family of scholars and officials, on his father's side the roots of his family tree reached down to craftsmen. And while his maternal ancestors came to Frankfort from the south of Germany, on his father's side they came from the north, from the region between the Thuringian Forest and the Harz Mountains. The poet's temperament came, then, from the happy amalgamation of two classes and two races. The grandfather, Friedrich Georg Goethe, was the son of a farrier. He learned the tailor's trade, but did not remain faithful to his calling. After he had married his second wife, Cornelia Schellhorn, owner of the Weidenhof in Frankfort, he became an innkeeper, and in this capacity increased the fortune he had already accumulated. The grandson did not know him personally, as he died before the boy's birth. The grandmother, on the other hand, lived to enjoy Wolfgang's early years. He describes her as a beautiful, spare woman of gentle, benevolent character, always neatly dressed in white.

To his grandparents was born in the year 1710 their third child, Johann Caspar Goethe, father of the poet. After he had been prepared for the university at the Coburg Gymnasium, he studied law four years in Leipsic,[9] practised at the Imperial Chamber in Wetzlar, and in the year 1738 obtained at the University of Giessen the title of Doctor of Jurisprudence, presenting a good dissertation upon a point in the law of inheritance. The ambitious man, however, did not consider his education now finished, but sought to round it out further by a year of travel. Toward the end of 1739 he travelled through Austria by way of Graz, and Laibach, and in Italy as far south as Naples, returning home by way of France. Accustomed to plain living and strict economy at home, the expensiveness, extortions, and discomforts of Italian travel made him "incredibly glad" when he had turned his back on Rome and Naples. But in later life he always spoke enthusiastically

of the glories of the southland, and it was his most earnest wish that his son might some day see them.

As a rich, well-informed, and experienced man it was his ambition to have the city council bestow upon him an office without salary, but also without the formality of an election. When this desire was not gratified the sensitive gentleman declared he would never after accept any office in the service of his city and, in order to fortify himself against any possible temptation to break his vow, procured (1742) the title and rank of an imperial councillor, which put him on an equality with the highest dignitaries of the city and prevented his accepting any office of inferior rank. Not yet fully satisfied, his son asserts, he wooed the daughter of the chief magistrate, because a son-in-law of a member of the council would be excluded [10] from the council according to the constitution of the city. Thus a capable man, who would have been abundantly happy in the practice of his profession, retired from active life, and in an unoccupied, unfruitful seclusion deepened the shadows that obscured his excellences. For he was not wanting in these. To a liberal education he added an acute thirst for knowledge and a strong interest in art, and to a thoroughly honest character a soft and tender heart and warm love for his children, for whose best interests he shunned no trouble or sacrifice. Nevertheless, these beautiful qualities exerted no real beneficent influence upon his family. His systematic, exacting method forced all his children's individualities into one rigid, pedagogical mould; he always demanded tangible evidence of utility and insisted upon a consistency and a perseverance thoroughly distasteful to young children. In order the more readily to induce his children to such conduct he enveloped his loving nature in a rough exterior and imposed upon himself a cheerless iron austerity. To this was added the embitterment which remained from his experiences in life, and withal a fretful irascibility which made every real or fancied wrong painful and intolerable.

Such a peculiar disposition caused the mother no less

suffering than the children. She assumed toward him more the position of a child than that of his proper equal. When only seventeen years of age, Katharina Elisabeth Textor had been suddenly thrust from her childhood joys into the serious duties of a housewife. Her husband was her senior by twenty-one years, so that in age she was nearer to her first children than to him. Between their mental and moral attainments there yawned no less a chasm, which was never bridged over by warm affection. She had grown up in the freedom of youth, without any higher education, and her learned husband felt it his duty to fill up the gaps in the training of his young wife. So he taught her Italian and kept her busy writing compositions, practising the piano and singing. In consideration of her other duties he was obliged, much to his regret, no doubt, to forego several other plans he had in mind for her improvement. But his good wife was in no sense in need of all his learning. Nature had bestowed upon her better gifts: a sound observation of men and things; an ever serene and cheerful disposition, that cast every black thought at the devil's feet; an ever active imagination, upon which she could draw as a perpetual source of stories; a keen appreciation of the beautiful in nature and poetry; the gift of felicitous expression; boundless patience with others' actions, which never permitted her to preach morals to any one; and the tact and inclination to exert at all times an influence which made for peace and good-will. When especially difficult moments came and her innate and happy disposition was unable to carry her through, she always took refuge in the book of books, the Bible, her one and only storehouse of wisdom. And with the help of this book and its Divine Author, whom she found in it, and in whom she believed with the firmness of adamant, she endured the trials which Heaven in its wisdom laid upon her.

Thus she formed a valuable counterpoise to her husband, and to this alone it is due that his noble purposes were not defeated, and his fine qualities not obscured, by his own weaknesses and blunders.

## II

### SCHOOL AND LIFE

Goethe's home—His brother Hermann Jacob—His sister Cornelia—Life in the home—Early education—The Bible—Hebrew—Attitude toward the Church—Father's collections—Influence of friends of the family—Boyish vanity—Influences outside the home—Earthquake of Lisbon—Seven Years' War—Count Thoranc quartered in the Goethe house—French theatre—Election and coronation of a German Emperor—First love—Gretchen—Sorrowful end.

WHEN Councillor Goethe was married, on the 20th of August, 1748, he brought his young wife from her home in the Friedberger Gasse to his mother's house in the street called Grosser Hirschgraben. Crowded, gloomy Frankfort was here lighter and more open. The house stood on the western limit of the territory built over, so that from the back windows of the upper stories there was a wide outlook across a number of gardens to the city wall, out over the beautiful, fruitful valley of the Main to the heights of the Taunus range beyond. Little Wolfgang liked to lose himself in this view, for the varied landscape, approaching storms, and the glow of the setting sun nurtured the longings and anticipations that filled his soul. The interior of the house was originally full of dark corners. In the year 1754, however, after the death of the grandmother, on whose account Councillor Goethe had postponed all changes, the house was made light and roomy by a thorough remodelling. Broad stairways and halls were put in, and these were made larger to the eye by the views of Rome which the father hung up in them.

The house was too large for the family, for, although in the period from 1749 to 1760 six children were born, four of them died while still quite young and the family remained small. Wolfgang's only companion among them beside his sister, Cornelia, who was one year younger than himself, was a brother, Hermann Jacob, who reached the age of six years. At his death, in January, 1759, Wolfgang, to the astonishment of his mother, did not shed a single tear. When she asked him whether he had not loved his brother, he did not answer, but ran into his room, pulled out from under the bed a bundle of papers written over with lessons and stories, showed them to her, and said: "I did all this to teach my brother." "In such things he was a queer child," remarked his mother in telling the little incident to Bettina Brentano.[11]

His love for his sister Cornelia was more outspoken. The closest bonds united the two and they shared the joys and sorrows of home life as true brother and sister. Their days were well occupied; the father liked to see the intervals between lessons—and they were not very long—devoted to the culture of silkworms, or the bleaching of etchings,* or some other task equally burdensome to the children. Evening itself did not always bring them the desired liberty. In the winter, especially, they were accustomed to reading aloud from some instructive but usually tedious book, such as Bower's *History of the Popes*,[12] and the father was often the first to begin to yawn. But he insisted that a book once begun be read to the end. Under such circumstances it was like a gleam of sunshine when the children could steal an hour from this forced study and listen to their mother's stories. Wolfgang, especially, followed the stories with intense interest. "He fairly devoured me," says his mother, "with his big black eyes,[13] and when the fate of some favourite character was not just to his liking, I saw the veins of his forehead

* The spots produced by light, dust, and smoke. as well as fly-specks, were removed by spreading the etchings out in the sun and keeping them moist.—O.

swelling with anger, while he tried to keep back the tears. Often he would interfere before I had finished and say: 'Mother, the princess will not marry that cursed tailor, will she, even if he does kill the giant?' Now if I stopped and saved up the catastrophe for the next evening, I might be perfectly sure that in the meantime he would have arranged everything, and thus my imagination, when it failed me, was frequently supplemented by his. If, then, the next evening, I carried on the threads of fate according to his suggestion and said, 'You guessed it. That 's the way it came out,' then he was all aflame and one could see his little heart beating beneath his ruff (*Halskrause*)."

The children probably received all their early education from their father, who used the popular old text-books, such as Comenius's *Orbis Pictus*,[14] Gottfried's *Chronicles*,[15] and the like. Later he employed private tutors, avoiding the public schools because of the pedantry and obtuseness which characterised their teachers. The boy was, however, not wholly deprived of the companionship of a larger circle of schoolmates, so important in the development of character, for certain of the private lessons were attended by as many as twenty children drawn from the families of neighbours and friends. If we examine the course of study drawn up by the father, we must admit that it would not have been easy to prescribe a broader and more liberal training. Hardly any of the more important realms of knowledge, hardly any of the nobler accomplishments, were neglected. The most important ancient and modern languages,—viz., Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, English, and Italian,—history and geography, religion, natural sciences, mathematics, drawing, music, dancing, fencing, and riding were included one by one in the boy's education. Facility in German, nowhere the object of systematic study in those days, was acquired by the writing of compositions—those composed according to rhetorical rules affording the elder Goethe especial pleasure—and by the reading of contemporary poets. The boy also became familiar with the German folk-poetry through the cheaply

printed folk-books, which cost only a few pence at the bookstalls, and were in great demand among the children.

Religious instruction seems to have been limited in his earlier years to the reading of the Bible, and we may assume it was his mother who guided his study of the sacred book. The circumstance that he grew up in a sincerely religious family, where the Bible was the mother's favourite book, seems to the more profound student to have been foreordained, like everything else in Goethe's life, for the special purpose of preparing his mind for the highest development. For what could all the literature that fell into the boy's hands signify when compared with the Bible, to which, he himself says, he owed almost all his moral education, and which occupied his imagination unceasingly and turned his mind to every field of thought. The Bible appealed to him under the most widely differing forms, and as book of law, as epic, as idyll, as hymn, or as love song, awoke in him a response to every chord. With his peculiar enthusiasm he delved into the unfathomable book and made its stories, teachings, symbols, and language his own forever. He was especially fond of losing himself in the naïveté and grandeur of the Pentateuch. Amid those Oriental scenes, peopled with a simple shepherd folk, his restless, roving spirit found peace and happiness. Thus the boy was drawn to nature and simplicity by the Bible, long before Rousseau and Winckelmann had influenced his intellectual life.

Love of the Old Testament was his motive for studying Hebrew: his teacher was Rector Albrecht, of the Gymnasium, a clever, sarcastic little man. The more careful reading of the Old Testament in the original language confirmed him in many a doubt concerning the divine authorship of the Bible, but this scepticism detracted in no wise from his love of its epical and ethical character. On the other hand, he was little impressed by the purely dogmatic teachings of the dry old formulas which he had to learn as a preparation for confirmation. In fact, the result was alienation from the Church rather than attraction to it. And yet

his meditative soul was keenly responsive to the sublime symbolism of the Church, which brought him into conscious communion with God and the universe. If we had no other evidence, we should know this from the following verses in *Faust*, which are but the crystallisation of happy memories of his youth:

Sonſt ſtürzte ſich der Himmelsliebe Kuß
Auf mich herab, in ernſter Sabbathſtille;
Da klang ſo ahnungsvoll des Glockentones Fülle,
Und ein Gebet war brünſtiger Genuß;
Ein unbegreiflich holdes Sehnen
Trieb mich, durch Wald und Wieſen hinzugehn,
Und unter tauſend heißen Tränen
Fühlt' ich mir eine Welt entſtehn.*

If we turn aside from the most important factors in Goethe's education to those of minor significance, we must mention his father's valuable collections. First of all, the beautiful, well-chosen library, in which were to be found the German poets of the eighteenth century,—except Klopstock, whose unrhymed verses were distasteful to the elder Goethe,—the best Italian and Latin poets, Roman antiquities, the classic works on jurisprudence, the best and most recent books of travel, historical and philosophical treatises, and encyclopedias of all kinds. Furthermore, the father owned an excellent collection of maps, natural history specimens, especially mineralogical, Venetian glass, carved ivory, bronzes, and old weapons. Beside his many etchings, he had a number of oil paintings, and was continually on the lookout for new acquisitions from home artists. Whatever

* Once Heavenly Love sent down a burning kiss
Upon my brow, in Sabbath silence holy;
And, filled with mystic presage, chimed the church-bell slowly,
And prayer dissolved me in a fervent bliss.
A sweet, uncomprehended yearning
Drove forth my feet through woods and meadows free,
And while a thousand tears were burning,
I felt a world arise for (= in) me.
*Taylor's Translation.*

was lacking in his collections was supplemented by friends and relatives, who in every way took a most vital interest in the boy's education.

There was the special friend of the Goethe household, Councillor Schneider, who smuggled in Klopstock's *Messias;* there was Pastor Stark, an uncle, in whose library Wolfgang discovered a Homer in German prose; there was easy-going Herr von Olenschlager, who explained the Golden Bull to the boy and associated him with children of other families in the presentation of French plays and in the writing of prize essays; there was, besides, obstinate Herr von Reineck, who instructed him about international and domestic relations; Privy Councillor Hüsgen, a shrewd lawyer with a Mephistophelian vein, capable of discovering defects in God himself; Legation Councillor Moritz, who taught him mathematics; and other men who, partly by precept, partly by example, and partly by association, influenced him in manifold ways. It must have been a peculiarly charming sight to see little Wolfgang, with his sparkling black eyes and his shrewd, pale face, looking up to the venerable perukes. They were all very fond of him, not merely because of his astonishing quickness of apprehension and his original conception of things, but also on account of the goodness and purity with which his whole being was thoroughly imbued. To these men of mature years and more or less morose nature he was as refreshing as the morning dew, and each of them sought to realise in him, as in a beloved son, his own ideal. Olenschlager wished to make him a courtier, Reineck a diplomat, Hüsgen a jurist, that he might be in position to defend himself and his property against the worthless race of men.

What wonder if the precocious grandson of the chief magistrate of the city and favourite of so many men of high position should become exceedingly self-conscious and manifest it by a certain strutting demeanour? His vanity bore him a rich harvest of jeers from his companions, but they always showed a sense of their own inferiority by their attitude toward him. "We always were his lackeys,"

remarked in after years his boyhood friend, Max Moors, who was two years older than Goethe.

Whatever was lacking in the formal education of the boy was supplied by a thousand other influences in his life. When little Wolfgang was sent on errands to craftsmen, he would watch them at their work and observe their habits of life. The shepherds' annual festivals at the Grindbrunnen and on the Pfingstweide brought him occasionally into touch with the rural population. The great fairs at Easter and Michaelmas filled his head with wild excitement. Wares of most various kinds and nationalities, a swarm of buyers and sellers from distant lands, and throngs of travellers were before his eyes for weeks and weeks and gave him an opportunity to form some conception of the commerce of the world and of the peculiarities of the people of far-away countries. Beside these periodic enlargements of the routine life of the city, there took place in his youth several extraordinary events which exerted a profound influence upon his development. As the first he mentions the earthquake of Lisbon, in November, 1755, which in a few moments destroyed a splendid, rich, commercial city and, according to currently believed but greatly exaggerated reports, sixty thousand human lives. This terrible calamity was a violent shock to his faith, and set him to doubting whether God really is as wise and as gracious as the first article of the creed teaches.

Not long after that catastrophe the Seven Years' War broke out. The figure of Frederick II., already greatly magnified by the two Silesian wars, now appeared mightier than ever, and presented to Wolfgang's eyes a personality far superior to all contemporaries. He and his father yielded readily to the magic of this personality and followed the King's successes with great enthusiasm, while his grandfather, with certain of his daughters and their husbands, was loyal to the Emperor and sought to minimise as much as possible his enemy's merits and triumphs. Thus the family was separated into two parties and the old cordiality was painfully disturbed. After a few unpleasant scenes

the father utterly avoided the grandfather's house, and Wolfgang had no longer any relish for his accustomed Sunday dinner with his grandparents. A further result of this dissension was the contempt of public opinion which began to show itself in young Goethe when he heard the most brilliant achievements belittled, not by the rabble, but by men of rank and position. Although the war had in the beginning affected the city but remotely, through its political aspect it became in 1759 a cause of immediate discomfort. The French army of seven thousand men, which on January 2nd occupied Frankfort, remained for several years quartered upon its citizens, a source of both famine and disease. The Goethe household received as inmate the royal lieutenant Count Thoranc,* [16] a highly educated, courteous gentleman, invested with the office of commandant of the city. Councillor Goethe, instead of being happy, under the circumstances, to have such an eligible guest quartered in the house, was extremely vexed, Prussian sympathiser as he was, by the necessity of lodging an enemy, and that, too, in his handsomest apartment. All attempts on the part of the Count, the family, and friends to reconcile him to the new condition of things were fruitless. He became only the more confirmed in his ill-humour, and on the evening of the battle of Bergen, near Frankfort, which resulted in a victory for the French, he insulted the Count so grievously that only the efficient intervention of his friend and godfather Dolmetsch saved him and the family from severe trials.

These new conditions, which weighed so heavily upon the father, were to the children a source of great pleasure and profit. Strict discipline and regularity of lessons were relaxed, and a gay, active life took the place of their customary monotonous existence. In the Count's quarters there was always something good to eat, something interesting to listen to, or something beautiful to look at. Soon after his arrival the Count, who was an ardent lover of art, gathered about him Seekatz of Darmstadt and the principal

* Thorane, Goethe's spelling of the Count's name, is incorrect.

artists of Frankfort to paint for him large pictures for the adornment of his own and his brother's residence in Grasse. A studio was arranged in the house, and Wolfgang, who had watched these artists before when at work for his father, was now in a position to observe their productions in all stages, and thus enlarge his knowledge of the technique and art of painting. Still greater charm and benefit was derived from the French theatre which came to the city with the troops. A complimentary ticket received from his grandfather opened to him the portals of this temple of art. Here, thanks to the interest of his mother, he became a regular attendant, in spite of the objections of his father, who held a very low opinion of the value of the theatre. In this way he became acquainted with the highly developed drama of the French through certain tragedies and a great number of comedies and operettas. The gracefulness of the latter made a special impression upon him and was probably one of the causes of his many later attempts in this field. Interest in the French theatre led him to study their classic dramatists, and he read all of Racine and Molière and most of Corneille. At the theatre he made the acquaintance of a handsome, sprightly lad by the name of Derones,[17] belonging to the troupe, who allowed him to go behind the scenes and get a glimpse of the licence of stage life. Though these sights were little suited to his youthful eyes, still they later furnished the author of *Wilhelm Meister* many a fine bit of material. Wolfgang took quite a fancy to Derones's elder sister, which found expression in all sorts of attentions and civilities. To his sorrow he soon noticed, however, that his tender wooings were unheeded. Still another disappointment came to him from his pleasant relations to the theatre. Some half-mythological, half-allegorical dramas inspired him to imitation, and in a short time he wrote a little play and submitted it to his friend Derones, secretly hoping it might perhaps be staged. His friend assured him, with patronising mien, that it was not impossible, but a few trifling changes would have to be made. These alterations turned out to be so ruthless that the

author's idol was destroyed beyond all hope of restoration. Even though his proud hopes of success in dramatic composition were now shipwrecked, still this Icarian flight resulted in good, in that it occasioned a thorough study of the theory of the drama, of which Derones had prated to him at great length, and a neat copy of the original outline of his play made his father somewhat more tolerant of his theatre-going. Furthermore, his surprisingly rapid progress in French appealed to the elder Goethe as a definite gain and completely reconciled him.

Two years and a half had passed since the occupation of Frankfort by the French before the councillor finally succeeded—to the sorrow of his children—in effecting the royal lieutenant's removal to another house. In order to forestall any further quartering in his house, he rented temporary lodgings to Moritz, director of the chancery, and a brother of the legation councillor. This increase in the number of people in the house made very little change in the quiet of the family, as the Moritzes, though close friends of the Goethes, kept to themselves.

The storm of war, which had in so many ways exerted a fruitful influence upon young Goethe, had scarcely blown over, when another great event—this time of a pleasing nature—brought new life into the old imperial city. At the beginning of the year 1764 Archduke Joseph was to be elected and crowned King of Rome. The thorough-going councillor was of the opinion that for such an event one should prepare beforehand, and not merely look on in gaping wonderment. Consequently, the records and covenants of the last election and coronation were brought out, and studying and copying were prolonged far into the night. The Goethe house became more lively. New guests arrived: on the first floor, a Palatinate cavalier; on the second, Baron von Königsthal, Wurtembergian Chargé d'Affaires. For the city was gradually filling up with such a multitude of visitors, dignitaries of all grades, soldiers and servants, actors, jugglers, and curious spectators, that the hotels were far from being able to accommodate them.

The ecclesiastical electors and many of the petty German princes and princesses appeared in person, the more important lay electors were represented by ambassadors, of whom Baron von Plotho, from the Electorate of Brandenburg, was everywhere greeted with whispered joy on account of the importance of his ruler and his own striking individuality. Furthermore, the papal nuncio had arrived, and the ambassadors of France, Spain, Portugal, and Holland, and the highest officials of Austria, among them the famous imperial minister, Count Kaunitz. Finally, on the 29th of March, Emperor Franz also arrived with his two oldest sons. Then followed a fortnight of coronation festivities, which, no matter whether they occurred in public or within closed halls, Wolfgang, as grandson of the chief magistrate of the city, was permitted to observe from special points of vantage. He was himself introduced to many a high and noble lord, was entrusted with many a commission, and heard enough of the negotiations of the electors among themselves and with the city, to give him an idea of the strange structure of the German Empire and its conflicting forces.

The excitement of the coronation also offered young Goethe the coveted screen for a love affair, which had stirred his feelings to a passionate ardour. When the man of sixty described in detail this boyish experience, it was not to furnish his readers with a few pages of pleasing entertainment, but because he was conscious of the turn which it gave to his development. Here for the first time he tasted of the extremes of joy and pain, and felt the unfeeling intrusion of harsh reality upon his fate and that of his friends. These experiences quickly matured the boy into young manhood, and slowly prepared the poet for his Gretchen tragedy. It may have been late in the summer of 1763, when Wolfgang was about fourteen years old, that a friend, whom he shields under the name of Pylades, introduced him to other young men of humble rank, who sought to use his poetic talent in a jest. They asked him to compose a love letter in verse, in which a bashful young

girl discovers her love to a youth. Wolfgang consented at once, and his new acquaintances dispatched the rhymed love letter in a disguised hand to a foolish young man, who was now thoroughly convinced that a girl whom he had been timidly courting was madly in love with him. As the happy lover wished nothing more ardently than to be able to answer in verse, Goethe's services were again appealed to. The happy youth showed his gratitude by giving an evening party at the home of his mediators, and there Goethe was astonished to meet a wonderfully pretty girl, a cousin of Pylades's acquaintances. He could not rid his mind of her image, and as he had no immediate occasion to return to her cousins' house he sought her in the church that he might have his fill of gazing on her during the long service. The farcical love affair soon brought Goethe again to the cousins' and to beautiful Gretchen. He was to compose a poetical answer to the lover's letter, and gladly undertook the commission, thinking only of Gretchen and drawing his inspiration from her, dreaming that she might some day send such a letter to him. When, in the absence of the cousins, he showed Gretchen his lyrical effusions, she begged him not to allow himself to be used as a tool in such a matter, which would lead to no good, but rather to put the poem in his pocket and go home. To be sure, it was a pity, she added, that such a fine poem could not serve some genuine purpose. Goethe eagerly took her at her word and asked her in a loving tone if she would like to sign the letter. When after some hesitation she did it, the young man was beside himself with joy, sprang up, and was about to embrace her. But she started back and begged him to take his poem and leave.

The more Goethe became intoxicated with Gretchen's apparent confession of her love, the more painful was the separation from the object of his adoration which followed his withdrawal from her cousins' stupid trick. But in a short time they approached him again, thinking to make use of his talent for another purpose. They brought him an order for a dirge and a wedding song, the honorarium

to be expended on a banquet at their home. Goethe, allured by the double charm of seeing himself in print and meeting Gretchen, engaged to write the poems. The young people began to meet almost every day, but Goethe concealed the fact from his family. With the frequency of the visits grew his need of being with Gretchen,—in fact, it soon seemed to him a necessary condition of his existence.

Meanwhile the coronation was drawing near, and Goethe became Gretchen's tutor in all the details of the great state function. The evening companies became more and more prolonged and more and more animated, and on one occasion, shortly before coronation day, the party, excited by the festivities, and augmented in numbers by some new arrivals from abroad, did not disperse till morning. Wolfgang had to steal home by a roundabout way, for on the direct road his father might have seen him through a little peep window (that may still be seen), overlooking the street called Kleiner Hirschgraben. At last came coronation day. Goethe was up bright and early in order to see all the important transactions as plainly and fully as possible. For the elaborate festal illumination in the evening he had an appointment with his friends and with Gretchen. To avoid being recognised he had put on a disguise, and he now walked about, his sweetheart on his arm, through the crowds of people, from one quarter of the city to another, as happy as if he were wandering over the fields of Elysium. When they grew tired and hungry the young people went into a restaurant and made merry until a very late hour. Goethe escorted Gretchen home, and on parting she kissed him on the brow. It was the first and last time that she showed him such a favour. For meanwhile, from a wholly unexpected source, a heavy storm-cloud had collected over the heads of the little company.

On an excursion to Höchst in company with Pylades and Gretchen's cousins, Goethe had met a young man whom the cousins wished him to recommend to his grandfather for an office in the city government. He granted the request and the young man was appointed. From that

GOETHE, ÆTAT 15

(From *Goethe Briefe*, by permission of Elsner, Berlin)

day Goethe had heard nothing more of him, until the morning after coronation brought him a terrible reminder of his protégé.

He was still in bed when his mother came into the room with troubled countenance and bade him get up, saying it had come out that he had been in bad company, and was implicated in a most discreditable affair. Councillor Schneider, commissioned by his father and the Government, was coming to investigate the case. Councillor Schneider, his "*Messias* friend," soon appeared and informed Wolfgang that several persons, among them the officer he had recommended to his grandfather, had counterfeited manuscripts, tampered with wills, and forged notes, and that he was accused of having abetted them in their crimes by means of letters and papers. Wolfgang denied having had anything to do with the matter and refused to make any further statements. But when the family friend urged him not to make things worse by denials and stubborn silence, and mentioned the house where Goethe had met Pylades and Gretchen's cousins, assuring him that the accomplices in that house would soon be arrested, he considered it wiser to make a clean breast of the whole incident and show his innocence and that of his friends, especially Gretchen. In great agony he unveiled the sweet secret of his love and all the innocent joys which had sprung from it, and ended by declaring—and here we see the revelation of another great phase of his character—that if the least injustice were done to his companions he would do himself some harm. The kind family friend sought to pacify him on this point, but Goethe, not trusting him, saw, in his excited imagination, Pylades, the cousins, and Gretchen ruined by his frank confessions; and his grief was so aggravated by these distressing thoughts that he finally threw himself in loud lamentation upon the floor and wept bitterly. His terrified sister found him in this state when she brought him the comforting news that Councillor Schneider had expressed a favourable opinion in the case to another member of the magistracy. Wolfgang could apply this consolation

only to himself and continued gloomily apprehensive as to his companions. He lost all interest in the public festivities and lent a deaf ear to his father's entreaties to go out and see them. He continually brooded over his misery, magnified a thousand-fold by solitude, until assured of the fate of the others. Thus he passed a number of days and nights in weeping and raving, until for tears and sobs he was scarcely able to swallow, and even his breathing seemed affected. Finally he was told that his friends, being found virtually innocent, had been discharged with a mild reproof, and that Gretchen had returned home. His satisfaction with the one result was counterbalanced by new grief over the other.

Then came healing balm from another source. A tutor, whom his parents had secured to care for and console him, told him, when questioned about the details of the trial, that Gretchen's innocence had won a glorious triumph before the judges, and that, when her associations with Goethe were alluded to, she had declared that she had always considered him a mere child, and that instead of urging him on to questionable actions and mischievous pranks she had dissuaded him from them. This medicine was effective. He was mortally offended by Gretchen's statement, and considered it inexcusable that he should have sacrificed sleep, peace of mind, and health for the sake of a girl who considered him a child. However, the wound was slow in healing, and only when enticed by summer into the deep stillness of the woods did the soul of youthful Werther find melancholy peace.

## III

### EARLIEST PRODUCTIONS

**Study** of law, philosophy, religion, and poetry—Accomplishments and experience at seventeen—His father wishes him to become a jurist—He desires to be a poet—German-Latin colloquies composed at the age of eight—*Märchen vom neuen Paris*—The Arcadian Society—Letters to Buri—Early poems—Great fertility—Variety of compositions—The puppet play—Passion for dramatising—Determines against the law—Plan to be a university professor—Departure for Leipsic.

WOLFGANG'S scientific education had meanwhile assumed a more serious and more profound character. Elementary instruction was early followed by the study of law, which, in order to please his father, he pursued with such zeal that he soon knew Hoppe's little textbook of the *Institutes* by heart, forward and backward, and, as he says, was perfectly familiar with the *Corpus Juris*. He had also taken up the study of philosophy. Among the Greeks he cared little for Aristotle and Plato,[18] but was attracted by the Stoics, especially Epictetus, who had taught so clearly how man might preserve his soul in peace in the midst of earthly ills. Of more recent philosophy he seems to have picked up a smattering here and there. On the whole, it was impossible for any systematic and dogmatic philosophy to make any special impression on him at that time. He liked best such works as united poetry, religion, and philosophy, as the Book of Job, Solomon's Song, Proverbs, and the Orphic and Hesiodic poems. Indeed, he argued with his tutor, who was to give him an introduction to philosophy, that there was no need

of a separate study of philosophy, as the ground was completely covered by religion and poetry.

He perfected himself further in Latin, both on account of the classic works of Roman literature and because most of the scientific and not a few of the poetical works of the civilised nations of Europe were written in that language. He mastered Latin with great ease, though without any real knowledge of the grammar, but his acquaintance with Greek remained superficial. To supply the shortcomings in his different studies he had recourse to the encyclopedic works of Bayle,[19] Morhof,[20] and Gesner.[21]

In this manner Goethe had acquired at the age of seventeen a very broad and liberal education. He had become familiar with the poetry of the leading civilised nations, partly in the original languages, partly in translations. If the Greeks, the English, and the Italians had been left somewhat in the background, his reading of the German, French, Latin, and Hebrew literatures was all the more extensive. Hand in hand with this went a knowledge of the language and the history of each of these peoples; in the political and legal history of Germany his knowledge extended to minute details. For his years he had made unusual progress in theology and jurisprudence. He had made himself pretty much at home in the natural sciences, less by systematic instruction than by observation and experiment. Of the arts he had studied especially music and drawing. He played the piano, the flute, later, also, the cello, and he drew so beautifully that Master Seekatz often said to his father it was a pity that Wolfgang was not destined to be an artist.

But the young man had also gathered a rich store of experience, not only from scenes of war and state which chance had brought to his door, and not merely from his bitter love troubles, but also from the extraordinary confidence which in spite of his youth he inspired in all his intimate acquaintances. He had been given an insight into the privacy of families, often a painful experience to him, and yet of the greatest importance for the deepening

of his intellectual life. All these things contributed to an early maturity, and it is easy to see why his father, who looked upon his development as tropical and whose ambitions for him were so high, could hardly await the time for sending him to the university. He had destined him to the study of law. The young man was to learn as much as possible from theory and practice in Leipsic, Wetzlar, Ratisbon, and Vienna, so that the whole career of a jurist and statesman might be opened to him.

Young Goethe listened in silence as these life plans were unrolled before him. He was dreaming of other ideals. Whenever he tried to think of something which he would like to have, and which would bring him happiness in life, the fancy-picture that possessed the greatest charm for him was the wreath of laurel woven to decorate the poet.

This picture was but the reflection of the poetic talent which expressed itself with elemental force early in his boyhood. Among his first productions [22] we may reckon the three German-Latin colloquies which he composed when eight years old, and which kind fortune has preserved in an exercise book.[23] We are astonished to see in them such invention in the development of the subject, such lively humour in the dialogue, such skill in delineating the individuality of the speakers, and such quickness and keenness at repartee. The first colloquy treats of a father and son going to the cellar. The son desires to be taken along, as he wishes to see his father filling up the wine casks. "Slyboots," says the father, "there is something at the bottom of this."—"I cannot deny that I have a desire to see again the cornerstone of our house."—"Follow me." Now they go down the stairs; the son wonders at the great darkness; the grave can be no darker. It soon becomes lighter. He sees the kettles, pots, casks, and other things lying about, and then finally the cornerstone. He remembers how he had laid it a few years before, surrounded by the masons; how the overseer was going to make a speech, but his memory failed him in the middle of it and he tore his hair with rage, while the crowd of spectators shook with

laughter. The father in turn recalls the difficulties and dangers incident to the remodelling of the house and proceeds to the filling of the casks. To the son's question, why this is necessary, the father replies that the wine is constantly evaporating and has to be replaced by other wine to keep it from spoiling. "In that case," says the son, "it would be better to anticipate by drinking it up." After this suggestion has been met, the curious son asks about the different sorts of wine and whether any of the old wines are called theological. The father laughs, saying that the clergy seldom drink old wine. "That is true," replies the son, adding pertly that the theologians, on the other hand, say that the jurists are the lovers of old wines. At this point the jurist father breaks off the conversation abruptly, ordering the son back to his work. But that he may not depart from the cellar unrewarded his father gives him a piece of wood, purporting to be a remnant of the mast of Columbus's ship. The son takes up the joke and replies with a laugh that he will keep the wood with his other antiquities until some Damasippus (foolish dealer in antiquities in Horace) comes to buy them. With this neat turn the conversation comes to a close.

The second colloquy is a conversation between two schoolmates, Wolfgang and Maximilian, before the opening of school. Wolfgang gives an excellent portrait of himself as a well-bred boy, eager to learn, who assumes toward his unruly comrade the mien of a wise mentor. The best of the colloquies is the third:

"*Father.*—What are you doing there, my son?

"*Son.*—Making wax figures.

"*Father.*—I thought so. Oh, when will you ever put nuts * aside?

"*Son.*—Why, I 'm not playing with nuts, I 'm playing with wax.

"*Father.*—Ignoramus, can it be that you don't know the meaning of 'nuts' in this connection?

* The little rogue here indulges in a pun on the Latin word *nuces*, which can mean both "nuts" and "childish play."

"*Son.*—Now I remember. But see how well I have learned in a short time to model in wax.

"*Father.*—To spoil wax, you mean.

"*Son.*—I beg your pardon. Am I not creating rather clever things?

"*Father.*—Yes, indeed. Show me some of your malformations.

"*Son.*—Among other animals I have made, with special success, a cat with a long moustache, and a city mouse and a field mouse to illustrate one of Horace's satires, translated by Drollinger into pure German doggerel.

"*Father.*—I like this reminiscence better than the beasts themselves. But have you made nothing else which shows your alleged art more advantageously?

"*Son.*—Yes, indeed; here is a whale, with mouth wide open, as if to swallow us, and two chamois, which Emperor Maximilian was so fond of hunting that he is said to have been unable to find his way out of the declivitous rocks till an angel in human form showed him the path.

"*Father.*—Why, you apply your scraps of history so aptly that one must pardon your misshapen figures. And is that all?

"*Son.*—By no means; for of all my models the ones to be especially admired are: the crocodile shedding false tears, the monstrous war elephant of the ancients, the lizard, friend of man, the croaking frog announcing spring, all of which lack nothing but life.

"*Father.*—Nonsense! Who would be able to recognise them without the labels?

"*Son.*—Alas! Is not every man the best interpreter of his own works?

"*Father.*—This statement is quite true, but not *apropos.*

"*Son.*—Pardon my ignorance and deign to look at this sleighing party. There are just a dozen in it, all different, partly creeping and partly flying creatures, of which the swan, the stag, the walrus, and the dragon seem to be the most natural.

"*Father.*—You may think so, if you like, but it is perfectly apparent that you make no real distinction between beautiful and ugly.

"*Son.*—Dear father, will you be so kind as to teach me the difference?

"*Father.*—Certainly, but everything in season. Your power of observation must first be more mature.

"*Son.*—Oh fiddlesticks! Why will you postpone it? Tell me about it to-day rather than to-morrow and I will listen to you while I play.

"*Father.*—I have already said it cannot be done now, —some other time. Put aside your childish nonsense now and go to your work.

"*Son.*—I will. Good-bye."

Beside the general merits which this colloquy has in common with the others, it is a matter of no slight interest that the seven-year-old boy inquires about the distinction between the ugly and the beautiful, ideas which the young are wont to consider firmly established and easy of apprehension. And further, that he embarrasses his father, who is apparently about to give the purely superficial definition of "harmony of proportions," by insisting on an immediate explanation, until the father, not knowing what else to do, bids him have done with his nonsense. Wolfgang's comical imitation of the manners of a menagerie keeper in referring to his animals also deserves notice.

Both the conduct of the conversations, in which the father is frequently worsted, and the literary peculiarities of the pieces preclude the idea that the elder Goethe dictated them to his son. For one is perfectly safe in saying that the father, even if he had been inclined to take the inferior position ascribed to him, never was capable of such poetic and dramatic compositions. The only thing which might detract from our admiration of the boy's invention, but which at the same time would increase our wonder at his talents in general, would be the possibility that the conversations were reproductions of real ones. But even such a suppo-

sition is only to a limited degree possible. At least the real conversations must have been of greater length.

After these colloquies we can place the *Märchen vom neuen Paris*, which impresses us with its clever and rich invention. The form must be attributed to the poet's later art, as he never wrote it down till 1811. But his very definite statement forbids us to deny that the contents belong to his boyhood. Then comes a period of several years before we meet with any further intellectual documents of Goethe's youth, which may be called in the broader sense literary. These are two letters of the fourteen-year-old boy, written in May and June, 1764, to the seventeen-year-old Ludwig Ysenburg von Buri in Neuhof. The letters are the more deserving of consideration because they acquaint us with a little episode in Goethe's life immediately after the Gretchen catastrophe, and passed over in silence in his autobiography. Buri had organised a "virtue league," called the "Arcadian Society," and Goethe wished to join it. The society received new members cautiously, and only after thorough investigation by the inspectors. The inspector for Frankfort was Karl von Schweitzer, with the league name Alexis. When Schweitzer had repeatedly disappointed his expectation of an introduction to Buri, Goethe wrote to the "Archon" in May, 1764. After a few formalities and compliments, he goes on in his letter to confess his shortcomings, in order that Herr von Buri may know whether or not they disqualify him for admission. "One of my chief failings is that I am somewhat impetuous. I dare say you know about the choleric temperament; but nobody forgets an insult more easily than I. I am also used to laying down the law, yet when I have nothing to say I can hold my tongue. But I will gladly submit to such a discipline as one might well expect of your wisdom. At the very beginning of my letter you will find my third fault, viz., that I write as familiarly to you as if I had known you a hundred years. But what is the difference? This is a habit I cannot break myself of. . . . It occurs to me that I have further the fault of great impatience

and a dislike of uncertainty. I beg you to decide as quickly as possible. These are my greatest faults. Your penetrating eye will see a hundred other little ones, which I hope, however, will not exclude me from your favour. . . ." Meanwhile Alexis warned the "Archon" Buri for heaven's sake not to take up with Goethe, whom he had failed to recommend on account of his vices. "On account of his vices." One can trace here the after-effects of the recent criminal lawsuit, in which Goethe's name had been involved. From the polite answer in which Buri referred him to Alexis as the proper channel of communication, Goethe thought he had some hope and wrote again to Buri, innocently calling Alexis one of his best friends, whom he had begged to tell the whole truth. "He is not to pass over any of my faults, but he must not keep back my good points either. But, with all that, I beg you kindly to take the pains to examine me yourself; for however clever Alexis may be, something may escape him which would be unpleasant to you. In some respects I resemble a chameleon. Is my Alexis to be blamed, then, if he has not yet studied all my phases? . . . We have a lot of blockheads in our city, as you no doubt very well know. Let us suppose, now, such a one takes it into his head to join your society. He asks his tutor to write a letter for him, and a most beautiful letter, too. The tutor does so and the young man signs it. In this way you are led to form a high opinion of his scholarship and initiate him without examination. When you scrutinise him closely you find that you have added to your numbers, not a scholar, but a numskull. That is unpardonable. Now it is quite possible that I am such a one, and so you need to be on your guard."

As a result of Schweitzer's reports, Wolfgang seems not to have been taken into the league. But this is of minor importance. What interests us here is the letters as evidence of the young poet's talents. The facility in composition, the self-analysis, the dominating humour, with which the fourteen-year-old boy speaks of himself, show even in these formal letters the claw of the lion.

To the next year belongs one of his real poems, *Die Höllenfahrt Christi*, which his friends printed without his knowledge in 1766. Here Goethe imitates the religious poetry of his time, and this composition shows, therefore, little originality. Nevertheless it is a striking production because of the smoothness of the verse and the purity and simplicity of the language. Any other poet so young would have yielded to the temptation to exhaust all his rhetoric in the treatment of this subject. Wolfgang, on the contrary, painted with the restraint of a mature artist. We possess further from the Frankfort period the following entry in Max Moors's album:[24]

Dieſes iſt das Bild der Welt,
Die man für die beſte hält:
Faſt wie eine Mördergrube,
Faſt wie eines Burſchen Stube,
Faſt ſo wie ein Opernhaus,
Faſt wie ein Magiſterſchmaus,
Faſt wie Köpfe von Poeten,
Faſt wie ſchöne Raritäten,
Faſt wie abgehaßtes Geld
Sieht ſie aus, die beſte Welt.*

The poet wrote these verses on his sixteenth birthday. Probably never did a sixteen-year-old youth gibe the world more gayly and more critically; and it makes little difference whether Voltaire guided his hand or not, for it is evident that the ideas had become his own free possession.

The above-mentioned poetic pieces are only tiny specimens of a mountain of compositions which the boy heaped up and later destroyed by fire. For, as Goethe tells us himself,

* Thus it is the world appears,
That is called the best of spheres:
Like a haunt of highwaymen,
Like a merry student's den,
Like a gaudy op'ra house,
Like a master's gay carouse,
Like a host of poet-freaks,
Like a store of fine antiques,
Much, indeed, this best of spheres
Like a worn-out coin appears.

even in early youth he was seized with a perfect rage for making rhymes and verses, and was encouraged by the applause of his parents and teachers to go to the greatest extremes. About the year 1763 he began to collect his poems. His fertility enabled him to hand over to his father as the yearly increase of his muse a large quarto volume of five hundred pages.

There is no kind of composition in which he did not try his powers. We have already heard of love songs and hymns for a wedding and a funeral; the religious poem of which we have heard can only be considered as the last link in a great chain of similar productions. He also wrote a long series of Anacreontic poems. He attempted the epic at the age of fourteen in an elaborate prose poem, drawn from the Scriptures, of which Joseph was the hero. He had, furthermore, set forth the story of Joseph in twelve scenes, some of which to his great satisfaction were depicted by Frankfort artists. To the epic category belong further the strange novel, in which he makes six brothers and sisters enter into correspondence with one another, and the humorous descriptions of travels and pleasure excursions in company with his friends.

But he was by far most fruitful in the dramatic field. The puppet show which his grandmother had given him at Christmas, 1753, exerted a great and lasting influence upon him. He soon began to direct it himself, and with the help of his father's servant produced *David und Goliath* according to a written text-book, the little fellow declaiming the parts of David and Jonathan with great fire. Since the presentation was received with applause, even if his father, for pedagogical reasons did leaven his praise with critical remarks, the boy became more and more absorbed in the new theatrical world. *David und Goliath* was cast aside, and more pretentious selections from Gottsched's *Deutsche Schaubühne* were put on the stage, as well as Italian-German operas which Wolfgang had rescued from the dust of his grandfather's library. By degrees the puppet theatre began to pall upon the active boy. He wanted to take a

part in the action himself. He organised among his friends a little troupe which the tailor servant of the household costumed, and for years they played enthusiastically upon an improvised stage before an audience consisting of the young actors' relatives. But just as the boy had given up the puppet play because he wished to appear himself upon the stage, so he was now eager to give, along with the plays of others, some of his own creations. After his childish naïveté had adapted to the stage some epic scenes from *Jerusalem Delivered*, which, to the great enjoyment of the spectators, but to his own deep vexation, compelled him to turn from dialogue to narration, he composed some original plays that were correct in the technique of the stage. He says in *Wilhelm Meister:* "My passion for dramatising every novel I read and all the history I was taught was irresistible, even in the case of the most refractory material. . . . Whenever we had a lesson in the history of the world I carefully marked where some man was stabbed or poisoned in a peculiar manner, and my imagination hurried over the exposition and the unfolding of the plot and hastened on to the interesting fifth act." At the same time he had a mania for reading plays and devoured a great mass of theatrical productions. The French theatre probably increased this passion greatly, and in the course of time he knew no greater happiness than to read, write, and act plays, and, whenever there were performances in Frankfort, to attend them. This passionate inclination could not but bring into the world a host of dramatic compositions. In the outline of his life which he sketched for *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (his autobiography), the poet mentions many lost pieces of the French type. Among them was the mythological, allegorical piece which he submitted to his friend Derones, also the tragedy of *Belsazar*, the first redaction of *Die Laune des Verliebten*, which was written in Alexandrines and has been preserved in a small fragment, *Amine*, and probably the compositions mentioned in letters from Leipsic,—*Isabel*, *Ruth*, and *Selima*. But his dramatic muse also paid fitting tribute to the Romans and Italians. We

know that he imitated Terence and wrote an Italian opera, *La Sposa Rapita.*

That a sixteen-year-old youth, who could look back upon such a fertile poetic activity, who had received praise and adulation for his productions from young friends and old, and who had been conscious of the power of his genius, should find difficulty in keeping to a regular civic career, such as his father planned for him, was to have been foreseen. In fact, the example of his father, who, after so much study, thought, and travel, led a solitary life between his fireproof walls, could not but make him doubly resolved not to follow in his tracks. Not to study law was, therefore, with him a settled purpose. He thought that he had made sufficient concessions to the demands of practical life when he fixed upon a chair in a university as his goal and to this end determined to study the classical languages and antiquities. He had proudly signed himself in Moors's album "A Lover of Belles-Lettres." At all other times he carefully guarded the secret of his plans communicating them only to his sister whom he terrified thereby not a little.

Finally came the time for Wolfgang to go to Leipsic, and he was glad of it, for he eagerly longed to get away from home and native city. He was out of sympathy with both: home, because of the pedantic surliness of his father; native city, because of the criminal trial and the defects in the municipal constitution, which he had learned to know so well. And so it came about that, at the end of September, 1765, when he left his native city, he turned his back upon it as indifferently as if he had not been reared there and was never to return.

# IV

## FIRST SEMESTER OF STUDENT LIFE

Gallant Leipsic—Goethe changes dress and conduct—Retains peculiarities of speech—Feeling of freedom—Aristocratic appearance of Leipsic—Goethe's private life—Ambition to be a professor of belles-lettres — Discouraged by the Böhmes—His poems condemned—Doubts his own talent—Burns his manuscripts—University lectures are barren, dull, unsatisfactory—No fondness for cards or dancing—Melancholy and lonely.

IN company with Bookseller Fleischer and his wife, Goethe, an odd little boy, all bundled up (as he describes himself ten years later), journeyed by the great post-road through Hanau, Fulda, Erfurt, Auerstädt, Naumburg, Rippach—jestingly alluded to in *Auerbachs Keller*—to Leipsic, "gallant Leipsic, famed throughout Europe," as the city of lindens on the Pleisse is called on the title-page of a guide-book published in the year 1725 by Iccander * of Dresden. Both adjectives were apt. The great fairs, the famous university, and the extensive book trade, of which Leipsic was even then the centre, had spread its name throughout all the countries of Europe and brought representatives of all European nations from time to time within its walls. Moreover, wealth, higher education, and international commerce, in conjunction with a French colony, had produced an aristocracy of manners and outward appearances that made the term "gallant" seem well deserved. Every German who entered the city felt immediately that a finer atmosphere prevailed here. Young Lessing, who had prepared himself for the university only a

* Iccander is the pseudonym of J. C. Crell. Cf. *Euphor.*, v, 775.

few miles from Leipsic, was painfully surprised to see how far he was behind the people of the "gallant" city. He complained bitterly of his utter ignorance in matters of social intercourse and of his rustic, unrefined person. If we wish to get an idea of the typical Leipsic dandy as contrasted with a country bumpkin we shall do well to take Goethe's advice and consult Zachariä's *Renommist* (Braggadocio), where in a well-known passage the goddess of fashion calls out to a Jena student by the name of Raufbold (Bully):

Sei nur ein Leipziger, verwirf die ſchlechte Tracht,
Die dich hier lächerlich, und Schönen ſchrecklich macht.
Dein Zopf verwandle ſich in einen ſchwarzen Beutel;
Kein Hut bedecke mehr die aufgeputzte Scheitel;
In Jena ließ dir nur ein kurzer Ärmel ſchön,
Weit beſſer wird dir hier ein langer Aufſchlag ſtehn.
Dein ungekämmtes Haar gleicht einem Sperlingsneſte:
Wie häßlich läßt dir nicht die leichte gelbe Weſte.
Sie, die itzt ſpöttiſch kurz um deine Hüften ſchlägt,
Sei länger aus Griſett und ſtark mit Gold belegt.
Die Reuter laß allein die ſchweren Stiefeln drücken,
Wie kann die Mädchen nicht ein ſeidner Strumpf entzücken;
Dein Degen werde klein und knüpf um ihn ein Band
Zum Zeichen, daß du dich zu meinem Reich bekannt.
Verabſcheu von nun an die ungezognen Händel;
Sprich zierlich und gallant, und rieche nach Lavendel.*

* Come, be a Leipziger and doff thy rural air
That renders thee absurd and odious to the fair.
A sable bagwig make of thine unseemly queue
And let thy well-frizzed hair no hat obscure from view;
In Jena, it is true, short sleeves are well enough,
More modish here in Leipsic appears a longer cuff.
Thy shock is like the nest of some untidy bird;
Thy yellow waistcoat sits thee ill, upon my word
Too short it falls about thy hips in mocking fold:
Procure a long grisett one, richly trimmed with gold.
Be none but troopers' feet in heavy boots arrayed,
Silk hose will sooner take the fancy of a maid
Small be thy sword, a knotted ribbon at its hilt.
Thy sworn allegiance to this land betoken thus thou wilt.
Be nice in speech and gallant, and boorish brawling shun;
Thy person aye exhale sweet lavender, my son.

We are not a little surprised at the ready recognition, on the part of our young student, of the superior elegance of the Saxon commercial and educational metropolis, even though he had come from a larger [25] and wealthier city, nearer the seat of French culture, where he had grown up in the midst of the foremost families.

Even his dress did not come up to the standard of Leipsic taste. To be sure, his father had personally selected for his clothes the finest and best materials; but in his economical spirit he had had them made by his servant, and while the art of this amateur tailor may well have sufficed for the Frankfort taste, in the Leipsic circles where young Goethe moved it seemed ridiculous. After his eyes were opened by some sympathetic woman friends he wasted little time in exchanging his entire wardrobe for a new one in the Leipsic style. In other features of his outward appearance, especially in his manners, he had a great deal to learn before he could feel himself on an equality with Leipsic gentlemen; and as he was given to extremes in his youth he passed at one bound from the Old Franconian habits to the most affected rococo. "If you could only see him," writes his friend Horn, who entered the university a semester later, in a letter to the younger Moors, expressing his indignation at Goethe's defection from the customs of his native city, "you would either go mad with anger or burst with laughter. I cannot understand at all how a man can change so quickly. All his habits and his whole bearing at present are as different from his former conduct as day is from night. His pride has made him a fop, and his clothes, with all their beauty, are in such foolish taste that he is the most conspicuous person in the whole university. But this does not disturb him; no matter how much one holds up his folly to him,

Man mag Amphion ſein und Fels und Wald bezwingen,
Nur keinen Goethe nicht kann man zur Klugheit bringen.*

* Amphion might one be, and conquer rock and wood
But ne'er a Goethe force to realise his good

He has adopted such gestures and poses with his hands that one cannot possibly refrain from laughing at them. He has acquired a gait that is simply intolerable. Oh! if you could only see it!

Il marche à pas comptés,
Comme un recteur suivi des quatre facultés."

But his clothes and manners were not all. His language, too, found no favour in Leipsic society. For though his father had always insisted that the children strive for a certain purity of language, still the more deep-seated peculiarities of the Frankfort dialect were not to be eradicated. Besides, Goethe was fond of spicing his language with vigorous biblical phrases, naïve expressions from the old chronicles, and blunt proverbs. And so the people of Leipsic, who claimed to have an old and universally recognised monopoly of the best German and considered a thin, watery style as perfection, looked upon Goethe's manner of speech as vulgar and strange; and they urged poor Wolfgang on all sides to submit in matters of language also to the dictation of the gallant city. But while he readily accommodated himself in outward matters, his change of idiom was scarcely noticeable.

The criticism of his Frankfort peculiarities, however, disturbed but little the young student's enjoyment of the new life that had dawned for him. He had been set free. This glorious feeling swells his breast, and in his joy he writes in a letter to his friend Riese:

Ich lebe hier
So wie ein Vogel, der auf einem Aſt
Im ſchönſten Wald ſich Freiheit atmend wiegt,
Der ungeſtört die ſanfte Luft genießt,
Mit ſeinen Fittigen von Baum zu Baum,
Von Buſch zu Buſch ſich ſingend hinzuſchwingen.*

* My sojourn here
Is like a bird's, that, in a shady wood
Inhaling freedom on a bending bough,
Doth undisturbed enjoy the balmy air
And flit at will from tree to tree,
From bush to bush, and make sweet melody.

His enjoyment of freedom was all the greater because his father had provided him with a well-filled purse, and Leipsic appeared to him at first cheerful, interesting, and important. As he entered the city, the streets and open squares swarmed with the gay multitude at the fair, the Greeks, Poles, and Russians being strangely conspicuous in their national costumes. The city itself presented a more modern and more aristocratic appearance than Frankfort. The streets were broader and more regular, the houses more pretentious and more richly ornamented both within and without. The upper stories did not project over the street, each beyond the one beneath, as at home. But he was especially impressed with the trading-houses, which, with their "sky-high walls" enclosing several courts and fronting on two parallel streets, seemed like miniature cities; as, for example, the Feuerkugel between the old Neumarkt (now Universitätsstrasse) and the new, where Goethe first took lodgings; or Auerbachs Hof, called "Little Leipsic," with its wine cellar already far-famed because of Faust's magic ride. The city was further splendidly adorned with large private gardens laid out with excellent taste for the time. "They are as splendid," Wolfgang writes to Cornelia in December, 1765, "as anything I have ever seen; perhaps I shall send you some day a view of the entrance to the Apels's garden. It is superb. The first time I saw it I thought I was entering the fields of Elysium."

His private life also took on a pleasant aspect. He was kindly received by the families to which he had brought letters; the excellent theatre was a great centre of attraction, and his dinners, at Privy Councillor Ludwig's, with a company composed almost exclusively of students of medicine, were always entertaining, and so delightful to his palate that he wrote his friend Riese and his sister Cornelia with great satisfaction about all the delicious dainties that were served. Lastly he was carried away with enthusiasm for his professors the first time he met them, if he writes his father the truth and not as a diplomat. "You

cannot believe," he says in a letter of the 13th of October, "what a fine thing it is to be a professor. I was completely charmed to see some of these people in their glory. *Nil istis splendidius, gravius ac honoratius. Oculorum animique aciem ita mihi perstrinxit auctoritas gloriaque eorum, ut nullos præter honores Professuræ alios sitiam.*" *

Goethe's thoughts, as we know, were of a professorship of belles-lettres, but his father probably thought he meant one of law, which was a good stepping-stone to the higher official career.

Thus the Leipsic heaven during the first weeks smiled benignly upon our student. But soon cloud after cloud came up, and the little bird which at first had rejoiced so loudly became gradually stiller and stiller.

Among the men to whom Goethe brought an introduction was Privy Councillor Böhme, professor of history and constitutional law. With frank devotion to the ideal the youth confided to him his plan of giving up jurisprudence and devoting himself to the study of the classics and poetry. But he had come to the wrong man with his confession. Instead of supporting him in this purpose, the professor turned upon him a cold douche of practical advice and disparagement of belles-lettres. The professor advised him that if he insisted on taking up the study of the classics, this could be done through the medium of jurisprudence; in no case, however, should he take the step without the consent of his parents. A later conversation with Frau Böhme, who was as wise as she was amiable, completed the work of persuasion begun by her husband. The young eagle let his wings be cropped, and hopped about sorrowfully upon the ground of professional study.

His gloom was deepened when Frau Böhme condemned some poems of his which he had recited to her without mentioning the author. As this fault-finding criticism was on occasion continued by Professors Morus and Clodius

* There is nothing more splendid, more dignified, and more honourable. Their authority and renown so dazzled my eyes and my soul that I thirst for no honour but that of a professorship.

and supported by good grounds, the poet was seized with rage and contempt for everything he had ever written in poetry and prose, and he mercilessly threw almost all the fine things which he had brought along from Frankfort into the fire. His landlady, good old Frau Straube, was not a little frightened when the smoke from the fire of this heroic sacrifice went drifting through the house. His sorrow over the destroyed writings would have been less intolerable if the criticism of Frau Böhme and others had not at the same time provoked in his young heart a doubt of his poetic talent and a disgust with poetic composition, which had previously afforded him so much happiness. So he writes the elegiac lines to Riese:

Ganz andre Wünſche ſteigen jetzt als ſonſt,
Geliebter Freund, in meiner Bruſt herauf.
Du weißt, wie ſehr ich mich zur Dichtkunſt neigte,
Wie großer Haß in meinem Buſen ſchlug,
Mit dem ich die verfolgte, die ſich nur
Dem Recht und ſeinem Heiligtume weihten
Und nicht der Muſen ſanften Lockungen
Ein offnes Ohr und ausgeſtreckte Hände
Voll Sehnſucht reichten. Ach, Du weißt, mein Freund,
Wie ſehr ich (und gewiß mit Unrecht) glaubte,
Die Muſe liebte mich und gäb' mir oft
Ein Lied. Es klang von meiner Leier zwar
Manch' ſtolzes Lied, das aber nicht die Muſen,
Und nicht Apollo reichten. Zwar mein Stolz,
Der glaubt es, daß ſo tief zu mir herab
Sich Götter niederließen. . . .
. . . . . .
Allein kaum kam ich her, als ſchnell der Nebel
Von meinen Augen ſank, als ich den Ruhm
Der großen Männer ſah und erſt vernahm,
Wie viel dazu gehörte, Ruhm verdienen.
Da ſah ich erſt, daß mein erhabner Flug,
Wie er mir ſchien, nichts war als das Bemühn
Des Wurms im Staube, der den Adler ſieht
Zur Sonn' ſich ſchwingen, und wie der hinauf
Sich ſehnt. Er ſträubt empor und windet ſich

Und ängſtlich ſpannt er alle Nerven an
Und bleibt am Staub. . . .*

And this was not Goethe's only bitter experience: after the novelty had worn off he was even more sorely disappointed in his university instructors. It is true the faculties with which he was concerned contained many prominent and highly honoured men. But what could they offer to the youth already so far advanced and eager to see things at once in their first and in their final analysis? Among the philologists the most brilliant was Ernesti, thorough and sound in his explanations of the classic authors, and a methodical critic of the Bible, but without originality. Goethe heard his lectures on Cicero's *Orator* †

* Quite other longings now than heretofore,
Dear friend, come surging up within my breast.
Thou knowest me much to poesy inclined
And how my bosom throbbed with deadly hate,
Which once I bore toward those, who, every thought
Devoted to the law, its sanctity,
Nor lent to muses' soft and sweet allures
Attentive ear, nor eager, longing hands
In love extended. Well thou knowest, my friend,
My firm belief, unfounded though it proved,
The muse did love me, ever and anon
My song inspired. Many a proud refrain
Resounded from my lyre, but not the gift
Of muse, nor of Apollo. In my pride
I weened that e'en the gods above
Did condescend to me. . . .
. . . . . .
Scarce had I come, when lo! the mist
Before mine eyes rolled back, as I beheld
The fame of scholars great, and first perceived
What gifts alone shall merit deathless fame.
Then first I saw that mine exalted flight,
As now revealed, nought differed from the worm
Contending with the dust, that sees on high
The eagle mounting to the sun and longs
To soar. He writhes and struggles, till, erect,
'Twixt hope and fear he stretches every nerve,
And falls back grovelling.

† In a letter to Riese, *Br.* i., 14, Goethe wrote, at the time that he was hearing them, that the lectures were on the *De Oratore*.—O.

and no doubt learned something from them, but he did not receive the enlightenment which he specially desired on the canons of esthetic criticism. He received somewhat greater benefit from Ernesti's colleague, Morus, a young man of thirty, his table companion at Privy Councillor Ludwig's, who in private conversation opened his eyes to the faults of recent German literature. Those upon whom this task should have fallen, Gottsched and Gellert, were in no wise capable of helpful criticism. Gottsched was the very man who had ushered in that inane, insipid movement against which the younger generation was revolting. He was a superannuated authority who had outlived his reputation when Goethe came to Leipsic. He was even unable to assert his social standing. "All Leipsic despises him. Nobody associates with him," writes Wolfgang to Riese. The visit which Goethe and Schlosser made him in the spring of 1766, and which Goethe immortalised in a delicious bit of genre in his autobiography, will always remain a wonderful symbolisation of the contrast between the old and the new at an important turning-point in German literature.

Gellert, on the contrary, stood extraordinarily high in the estimation of young and old. But within his narrow field of vision there grew no fruits that Goethe could enjoy. From his lectures on literary history and esthetics our young student could carry home at most a few learned facts; for Gellert had no conception of the poetry [26] that wells up out of a full heart and genuine feeling. In all his lectures on taste Goethe never heard him mention the best names of the time: Klopstock, Kleist, Wieland, Gessner, Gleim, Lessing, Gerstenberg, either in praise or in condemnation. His ethical lectures, bearing evidence of a beautiful soul and noble sympathy, made an impression for the moment, but when critically examined they lost their pleasing glamour. His practical exercises in German and Latin composition for the cultivation of the understanding and style were equally distasteful to Goethe, since Gellert objected to verse in compositions, while impassioned,

stirring prose seemed to his tame mind something outlandish and objectionable. Clodius, a younger colleague, soon took charge of Gellert's exercises, and he was somewhat more patient with poetry. But his own verses rattled so with their antiquated fetters that they brought down the biting sarcasm of his gifted hearer.

Goethe received no greater satisfaction from the philosophers. Of real being, the world, and God the student thought he knew about as much as the professors, and in more than one respect their philosophy seemed to him very lame. So it was not to be wondered at that toward the end of the semester the doughnuts which came from the frying-pan just at the hour when Winckler was lecturing were more of an attraction to him than the professor's philosophy, and brought the *collegium philosophicum* to a sweet but untimely end. The same professor's physical lectures, however, proved to be of permanent value to him, and he remembers them later in his study of the theory of colour.

The professors of law, to which it was his duty to devote himself, could not have kept him in their field even if their lectures had shown more thoroughness and intelligence than they really did. Thus the university, whither he had gone with such great expectations, had become for him in one semester a place of barren learning and dull mediocrity.

He also gradually lost interest in his social affiliations in Leipsic. He had endured the criticisms of his clothes and manners, was more sensitive when his language was found fault with, but when his judgment was disapproved of and he was expected to meet the social requirements in card-playing and dancing, both of which were odious to him, he became embittered. He was brought face to face with the fact that he, the much-admired and over-indulged prodigy of Frankfort; he, the grandson of the chief magistrate of the city, treated at home with marked respect, was personally of no importance here, and that if he cared to enjoy any consideration he must conform to the demands of Leipsic society. Too proud and, with all his wavering, too self-assured to yield, he preferred to withdraw into solitude,

KLOPSTOCK

After the Painting by Fuel

(From *Life and Times of Goschen*, by permission of John Murray)

where he was often the victim of melancholy moods; and the same Goethe who on his arrival in Leipsic had exclaimed to his friends, "Fancy a little bird on a green bough surrounded by every joy; that is how I am living," complains a half-year later:

Es iſt mein einziges Vergnügen,
Wenn ich, entfernt von jedermann,
Am Bache bei den Büſchen liegen,
An meine Lieben denken kann.
Da wird mein Herz von Jammer voll,
Mein Aug' wird trüber,
Der Bach rauſcht jetzt im Sturm vorüber,
Der mir vorher ſo ſanft erſcholl.*

* The one and only joy of mine
Is when I to a brook-side flee,
There in a shady nook recline,
And dream of those so dear to me.
My throbbing heart is filled with pain,
With tears mine eye,
The storm-swelled brook goes roaring by
Which once did sing a soft refrain.

# V

## KÄTCHEN SCHÖNKOPF, BEHRISCH, OESER

**Arrival** of Horn and Schlosser—Introduction to the Schönkopfs—Goethe and Kätchen in love—Goethe conscious they can never marry—Their associations—A rival—Triumph—*Annette*—Another rival—Jealousy—Letters to Behrisch—Lovers part as friends—Behrisch's character—Influence over Goethe—Slander—Odes to Behrisch—Goethe avoids Gellert and Böhme—Associations with the Breitkopfs and the Obermanns—Study of etching with Stock—Painting and drawing with Oeser—Oeser's influence—A visit to the Dresden Gallery.

AT the beginning of the second semester, Goethe was made happy by the arrival of two of his Frankfort friends: cheerful little bandy-legged Horn (called "Hörnchen") and Johann Georg Schlosser, later to become the husband of Cornelia. The former came to study, the latter for a short sojourn. Schlosser was Wolfgang's senior by twelve years and for some time had been engaged in the practice of law at Frankfort. But he had given up practice because it failed to satisfy the larger aspirations of his mind, and he had accepted a position as private secretary and pedagogical adviser to Duke Friedrich Eugen of Würtemberg, in command of a regiment of dragoons at Treptow on the Rega in Pomerania. Passing through Leipsic on his way to his new field of labour, he stopped a few weeks and was much in Goethe's company. Greatly attracted to this serious, steady character, whose repose and sagacity were doubly impressive when compared with his own thoughtless and vivacious nature, and whose thorough and broad education commanded his high esteem, Goethe spent with him many hours every day in delightful conver-

sation, and felt his old poetic impulse return. Schlosser's visit, however, assumed for the youth, tinged as he was with melancholy, a much greater importance than that of a mere temporary intellectual and spiritual stimulus. Schlosser had engaged board and lodgings of the vintner Schönkopf, in the Brühl, and invited Goethe to dine with him every day. The people they met there were: the good Assessor Herrmann, amateur of art, and later burgomaster of Leipsic; the refined Privy Councillor Pfeil; quiet Zachariä, brother of the poet; Falstaff Krebel, editor of geographical and genealogical hand-books, beside several students of noble birth from the Baltic provinces of Russia. We may take the poet at his word that no special persuasion was required on the part of his table companions to induce him to take his meals with them, even after Schlosser's departure, for the Schönkopf household contained a stronger magnet than its distinguished and cultured guests. This was the daughter of the house, Anna Katharina Schönkopf, called by Goethe Ännchen or Annette, while her real nickname was Kätchen. After a very few days of acquaintance the young man's heart was all aflame, and his relation to her formed, from now on, the centre of his Leipsic life. Kätchen Schönkopf is unanimously praised by all who knew her. She had a pretty figure and a pleasant, open face, a good deal of understanding, was natural, cheerful, somewhat roguish, a good, honourable, warm-hearted girl. Horn, who lived at Schönkopf's, calls her the most virtuous and perfect of girls, and assures his friend Moors that Goethe and Kätchen seemed to be born for each other. Goethe loved her with the full ardour and seriousness of an honest, optimistic youth, and yet from the very beginning of his passion he is conscious that she can never become his wife, conscious that there will come an hour when duty and necessity will command his separation from her. And for that reason, in his quiet moments he disapproves of his love-making, which must arouse illusory hopes in Kätchen's heart. Nevertheless he does not conquer his inclination, but gives it free course for two full years. In this conduct

lies a moral weakness which in view of the seriousness with which he looked upon the relationship cannot be explained as the frivolity of a student, especially as the same phenomenon recurs several times in the mature man. But it is certain that it was not outward circumstances which disclosed to him the aimlessness of his love, even in its first stages. Neither was he influenced by the fear that his father would never give his consent to such a union (for his passion would have given him the power or at least the courage to break down every resistance), nor was it the pride of his social superiority to a girl who indeed was, according to his expression, without position and without means, for in a letter to Moors he speaks of these things with contempt. It was rather the need, dimly conscious in his mind, of rounding out his experience and not allowing himself to become firmly rooted until he should have realised his vaguely formed ideal of life, toward which he yearned as if impelled by irresistible necessity. On the other hand was the no less irresistible power of a love-passion, which went far beyond the ordinary limits of glowing youth. So there contended within him two mighty demonic powers, which crushed between them all other considerations suggested by reason or by conscience. As now, so later. It is easy to understand that from such a struggle, the violence of which was greatly heightened by the torments of subtle casuistry, he suffered intensely. Tossed about by conflicting emotions and wild caprices, he tortured himself and his beloved, at times all who knew him, beyond all endurance. So in faithful remembrance of those days Goethe in his autobiography cannot often enough characterise his state of mind at that period as moody, whimsical, confused, stubborn, and the like; and the recently published letters to Behrisch, and *Die Laune des Verliebten*, emphatically verify this self-characterisation.

Let us take his letters as the safest guide to the development of their relationship. In this way we shall not only receive our first deep and sure insight into the heart of this singular man; we shall also become acquainted with the

poet in his early greatness. For these letters are nothing less than a companion piece to *Werther*, characterised by all the imperfection and stormy improvisation of youth.

Goethe had been in love with Kätchen since the end of April, 1766, and she, though three years older, returned his love with all her heart. For who could have resisted the wonderful though eccentric youth, when he poured out the gold of his heart and mind? The love was kept secret from Kätchen's father and mother, and given out as a mere friendly interest, since the lovers felt very sure that her parents would terminate her relations with such a young and aristocratic gentleman as being to no purpose. For greater secrecy Goethe feigned a love-affair with a well-born young lady, of which, however, he must soon after have grown weary. His love of Kätchen was, for the student Wolfgang, reason enough for taking his meals not only at noon but also in the evening at the Schönkopf inn, and for dividing many of the intervening hours between the tap-room and the family living-room above. Beside the many opportunities which favourable fortune afforded there were special occasions, such as singing, instrumental music, and theatricals, for going to the dear house in the Brühl and staying there as long as possible.

The summer months of 1766 passed in undisturbed happiness of love. A rival who put in his appearance served only to heighten the happiness of Wolfgang, who always came off triumphant. Thus he writes * with pride and joy in the beginning of October "from the writing-desk of his little one," who had gone with her mother and the unsuccessful wooer to the theatre, to Tutor Behrisch, whom he had met in the meantime and with whom he had become intimate:

"It is very pleasant to observe a man taking all conceivable pains to make himself loved, but without the least

* The original is in French. During the first two years in Leipsic Goethe often made use of French for the sake of practice. As his passion increased and he began to turn to nature, the foreign idiom vanished from his letters.

success, a man who for every kiss would contribute two louis d'or to the poor fund, and yet will never get one, and then see me comfortably seated in a corner and considered by the other man as an ill-mannered blockhead, and yet, without showing my beloved any attention whatever or paying her a single compliment, receiving favours for which this man would make a journey to Rome. I wanted to leave when she went, but to prevent me she gave me the key to her writing-desk, with permission to do or to write whatever I liked. 'Stay here,' she said, 'till I return. You always have some nonsense in your head, either in verse or in prose; put it on paper at your leisure. I will offer father some excuse for your staying up here; if he sees what is back of it—well, we can't help it.' Furthermore, she left me two fine apples—the gift of my rival. I ate them; they tasted excellent."

A few days later he excused himself to Behrisch for not having accepted an invitation to supper. He had received a note from his "little one," urging him to come to her as soon as possible. "I flew to her. I found her alone! The whole family was at the play. God in heaven! what a delight to be alone with one's sweetheart four hours consecutively! They passed without our noting them. How happy these four hours made me!"

The winter of 1766–1767 goes by without our hearing anything further about his love in his correspondence. He ceased to write to Behrisch. In May, 1767, he mentions Kätchen's name for the first time to his sister, remarking, with feigned indifference, that the little Schönkopf girl deserved to be remembered among his acquaintances; that she was a very good girl, with a straightforward heart and a pleasing artlessness, who looked after his washing and his clothes, and thereby earned his love, for he was not affected by her beauty. In August we learn further that in her honour he has named a collection of poems *Annette*.

Autumn came. The love-affair had lasted now a year and a half. The excited youth, tormented by contradictory moods, had gradually become more and more ex-

acting, fastidious, sensitive, and distrustful, and was always demanding new and surer proofs that he was the sole possessor of Kätchen's heart. "You make the light bond of love a heavy yoke," is the *apropos* remark of Eridon (Goethe) in *Die Laune des Verliebten*. This resulted in strained relations, and every trifling incident could not but produce a crisis. Such incidents occurred during the fair which came about this time.

At the Schönkopfs' two young strangers had taken lodgings, and were to take both dinners and suppers in the house. This was annoying to the suspicious lover, and Kätchen, suspecting what a storm was brewing, begged him in advance, with the warmest protestations of her love, not to torment her with jealousy, swearing that she would be his for ever. "But what can she swear?" exclaimed the captious lover. "Can she swear never to see otherwise than now? Can she swear that her heart shall beat no more? . . . to-day I was standing by her and talking, while she played with the ribbons on her bonnet. Suddenly the youngest boy came in and asked his mother for a taroc card. The mother went to the desk, and the daughter passed her hand over her eye and rubbed it, as if something had gotten into it. That is what makes me furious. I am foolish, you think. Well, hear further. I have seen the girl do this before. How often she has done exactly the same thing, in order to get her hand up to her face and conceal her blushes and her confusion from her mother! and would she not do the same thing to deceive her lover that she did to escape her mother's notice?" In the next letter he is calm again; he hopes that these supposed rivals will soon drive each other mad. But scarcely have a few days more passed when there rages within him a wilder storm than ever. "Another such night as this," he exclaims, in another letter to Behrisch of the 13th of October, "and I shall not need to go to hell for all my sins. You may have slept peacefully, but a jealous lover, who had drunk just enough champagne to warm his blood to a pleasing heat and to enkindle his imagination to the highest

pitch! At first I could not sleep, tossed about in bed, sprang up, raged; and then I grew tired and went to sleep; but how long? I had stupid dreams of tall people, plumed hats, tobacco pipes, *tours d'adresse*, *tours de passe-passe*, and then I woke up and consigned it all to the devil. After that I had a quiet hour, pleasant dreams. Her accustomed mien, beckoning at the door, kisses as we passed, and then, all of a sudden, ft! she had me in a bag. After that it seemed as if I were away from her, but not out of the bag; I wished to be let out,—and awoke. The cursed bag was in my head. Then the idea came to me suddenly that I would never see you again—for I had firmly made up my mind to it, and am still half in the notion—and that I felt, in a moment when I would not have given the devil a penny to ransom my little one from his claws, in a paroxysm of fever that made my head swim. I tore up my bed, chewed a corner of my handkerchief and slept till eight o'clock upon the palatial ruins of my bed. . . . I will be wise, which in the case of a lover means to be calm. It is a new addition to my collection of pistols, which I began during this fair. For to pout and make a row would do me no good! She has phrases that stop one's mouth, as you know, and make her accuser look like a big ninny, when she feeds him on them."

The next day he addresses an apparently cheerful letter to Cornelia about wholly indifferent things; feels, however, forced to insert: "Like an April day, it is only a whim with me that I am cheerful, and I would bet ten to one that to-morrow a stupid west wind will blow up a rain." On the 16th he has a stupid scene with Kätchen about a stupid toothpick. Then he is pretty calm for a fortnight. The fair guests have gone home, yet a new rival has appeared in the person of a fellow-student by the name of Ryden; but Kätchen treats him so badly that Goethe enjoys the situation. Then he is sobered down and kept in his room by a fall from his horse, until the week beginning November 8th, which brings a wound to Kätchen's feelings that the lover can never again entirely heal.

Let us listen to his passionate confessions to Behrisch concerning these days.

Tuesday, the 10th of November, he writes:

"*7 P.M.* Ha! Behrisch, here is one of those moments. You are far away, and paper is only a cold refuge when compared with your arms. O heavens, heavens! But first let me regain my senses. Behrisch, love be damned! Oh, if you could see me, see me raving in my misery, not knowing whom to rave at, you would wail and howl. Friend! friend! Why have I but one friend?"

"*8 P.M.* My blood is quieted down. I can now converse with you more calmly. Whether reasonably or not, God only knows. No, not reasonably. How could a madman speak reason? I am mad. If my hands were in chains, I should know what to bite. . . .

"I have made me a pen to regain control of myself. Let us see if we can get on. My loved one! Ah, she will be mine for ever. You see, Behrisch, I feel it in the very moment when she makes me furious. Heavens! heavens! Why must I love her so? Let us begin again. Annette is making—no, not making. Be still, be still, I will tell you everything in order.

"On Sunday, after dinner, I went to see Doctor Herrmann and came back to the Schönkopfs' at three. She had gone to the Obermanns'; for the first time in my life I wished I were also there, but I knew of no excuse, and decided to go to the Breitkopfs'. I went, but was not in a peaceful frame of mind. Hardly had I been there a quarter of an hour, when I asked Fräulein Breitkopf if she had not some message for the Obermanns about *Minna* [*von Barnhelm*]. She said no. I insisted. She said I might stay there, and I, that I was going to leave. At last, angered by my requests, she wrote a note to Fräulein Obermann, gave it to me, and I flew over. How happy I hoped to be! Woe to her! She spoiled my pleasure. I arrived. Fräulein Obermann broke open the note; it ran as follows: 'What strange creatures men are! changeable without knowing why. Hardly is Herr Goethe here, when he gives me to

understand that he cares more for your society than for mine. He is forcing me to give him some message to you, even if it does not amount to anything. In spite of my anger at him I am grateful to him for giving me an opportunity to tell you that I am ever yours.'

"After Fräulein Obermann had read the letter, she assured me she did not understand it; my girl read it, and instead of rewarding me for coming, and thanking me for my affection, treated me so coldly that Fräulein Obermann and her brother could not help noticing it. This conduct, which she kept up the entire evening and all day Monday, gave me such offence, that Monday night I fell into a fever, which racked me terribly through the night with hot and cold, and kept me at home the whole day after—well, Behrisch, don't expect me to tell it in cold blood. Heavens!—This evening I sent down-stairs for something. The maid came back with the news that she had gone to the play with her mother. I had just passed through a chill, and at this news all my blood was on fire. Ha! at the play! at a time when she knew that the one she loved was ill. Heavens! That was terrible; but I forgive her. I did n't know what play it was. How? Can it be that she is at the play with *them?* With them! That made me tremble! I must know.—I dress myself and run like a madman to the theatre. I take a ticket for the gallery. I reach my seat. Ha! a new discomfiture. My eyes are weak and cannot see as far as the boxes. I thought I should lose my mind, was going to run home and get my glass. A poor fellow who was standing at my side rescued me from my confusion. I saw that he had two. I asked him, as politely as I knew how, to lend me one; he did so. I looked down and found her box—O Behrisch——

"I found her box. She was sitting in the corner, beside a little girl, God only knows who, then Peter, then the mother.—But now! Behind her chair Herr Ryden, in a very affectionate posture. Ha! Fancy me! Fancy me, up in the gallery with an opera-glass—seeing that! Damnation! Oh! Behrisch, I thought my head would burst with

rage. They were playing *Miss Sarah* [*Sampson*]. Fräulein Schulz was in the title rôle, but I could not see or hear anything. My eyes were on that box, and my heart was palpitating. Now he leaned forward so that the little girl who sat by her could see nothing. Now he stepped back. Now he leaned over the chair and said something to her. I gnashed my teeth and watched him. Tears came into my eyes, but they were caused by the strain of looking. I have not yet been able to shed any tears all evening.—Heavens! heavens! Why did I have to excuse her at that moment! Yes, I did it. I saw how she treated him quite coldly, turned away from him, hardly answered him, seemed to be importuned by him. I thought I saw it all. Ah, my glass did not flatter me as my soul did, I wished to see it! O heavens! and if I had really seen it, love would not have been the final cause, to which I should have ascribed it.

"—On with my story. Thus I had sat for a quarter of an hour, and saw nothing but what I had seen in the first five minutes. Suddenly the fever came on me with full force and for a moment I thought I should die; I gave the glass to my neighbour and did not stop to walk, I ran out of the house—and have now been with you for two hours. If you know a more unhappy man than me, with so much talent, such good prospects, and such advantages, just name him and I will keep silent. All evening I have tried in vain to weep; my teeth would come together, and when a man gnashes his teeth he cannot weep.

"Another new pen. A few more moments of quiet. O my friend! Already the third sheet. I could write you a thousand without getting tired. . . . I have slept in my chair for a quarter of an hour, I am really very weak.——

"How shall I pass this night? I dread it.—I have been asleep again; I am very weak. To-morrow I shall go out to see her. Perhaps her coldness toward me has abated. If not, I am sure I shall have a double attack of fever to-morrow night. Let it come! I am no longer master of myself. What was I doing the other day, when my horse

became unmanageable and ran off? I could not hold him; I saw death, at least a terrible fall, before my eyes. I risked the danger and jumped off. Then I had courage. Perhaps I am not the most courageous of men, am only born to be courageous in danger. But I am in danger now and yet not courageous. Heavens! Friend, do you know what I mean? Good-night. My brain is all in a muddle. Oh, if the sun were only up again! . . .

"*Wednesday morning.* I have passed a terrible night, I dreamed about *Sarah.* O Behrisch, I am a little calmer, but not much. I shall see her to-day. We are to rehearse *Minna* [*von Barnhelm*] at the Obermanns' and she will be there. Ha, if she should continue to be so cold to me, I could punish her. Most terrible jealousy should torture her. But no, no, I cannot do that.

"*8 P.M.* Yesterday about this time, how different it was from now! I have re-read my letter and would certainly tear it up, if I could be ashamed of appearing before you just as I really am. This violent longing and this equally violent dreading, this raging and this bliss will acquaint you with the young man and you will pity him. What yesterday made the world a hell to me, to-day makes it a heaven, and will continue to do so, until it can no longer make it either of the two.

"She was at the Obermanns' and we were alone for a quarter of an hour. It takes no longer for us to become reconciled. In vain does Shakespeare say: 'Frailty, thy name is woman,' the image of frailty would more easily be found in a young man. She saw wherein she was wrong, she was touched by my illness, and she fell upon my neck and begged forgiveness: I forgave her all. . . .

"I had the strength not to tell her about my foolish actions at the play. 'You see,' she said, 'we were at the play yesterday; you must not be angry at that. I had moved my chair clear into the corner of the box and seated Lottchen beside me so as to be sure that he should not sit near me. He stood behind my chair the whole time, but I avoided talking with him as much as possible. I talked

with a lady in the next box and wished I were over there with her.' O Behrisch, I had persuaded myself yesterday that I had seen all that, and now she told me about it. She! clinging to my neck. . . . Good-night, I am dizzy as yesterday, but for another cause. My fever did not return to-day; as long as the weather remains good it will probably not return. Good-night. . . .

"Annette sends you greetings. Two sheets, now I think I should stop. Good heavens, what a lot of writing! I have read it over again, and I believe it would alienate you from any stranger, but you will take pity on your friend. It is true that I am a big fool, but I am also a good fellow. Annette thinks so; don't you, too?"

A week later he reports to Behrisch that Kätchen is in untold misery. The reconciliation was only temporary. Goethe keeps pestering Kätchen every little while. On the 4th of December: "I am still in a bad, very bad humour"; on the 15th of December: "I will answer you, because I am in a good humour and the weather is nowadays very changeable." He is honest enough to confess: "All the vexations that come up between us are my fault. She is an angel and I am a fool."

The winter semester is at an end, and his stay in Leipsic is to last only one more semester. His conscience bids him more urgently than ever come to a clear understanding with Kätchen.

In March, 1768, he writes to Behrisch: "Listen, Behrisch; I can never forsake the girl, I don't want to; and yet I must get away from here, I want to get away; but she shall not be unhappy, if she remains worthy of me, and that she now is! Behrisch! she shall be happy. And yet I shall be so cruel as to rob her of all hopes. That I must. For whoever gives a girl hopes, makes promises. If she can get an upright husband and live happily without me, how glad I shall be! I know my obligations to her; my hand and my means belong to her; she shall have everything that I can give her. Curses upon the man who marries before the girl is married that he has made wretched!

She shall never feel the pain of seeing me in the arms of another before I have felt the pain of seeing her in another's arms, and perhaps even then I shall spare her this terrible feeling." The explanation, for which Kätchen's reserve has meanwhile prepared the way, is finally made in April. On the twenty-sixth of the month he writes to Behrisch: "Oh, that I could tell you everything! I cannot, it would cost me too much of a struggle. Be it enough for you to know that Nette and I have parted, and we are happy. It was hard work, but now I sit here, like Hercules who has finished all his tasks, and survey the glorious booty. It was a terrible time before the explanation, but the explanation came, and now—now I know for the first time what life is. She is the best, most amiable girl.—Behrisch, we are living on the most pleasant and most friendly terms, just as you and she do. No more confidential conversations, not a word of love any more, and so pleased, so happy: Behrisch, she is an angel."

The warm friendly relationship is kept up even after Goethe's departure from Leipsic. Not until Kätchen is betrothed to Doctor Kanne, in May, 1769, does it begin gradually to cease.

About the same time that Goethe entered the Schönkopf house he became acquainted with the man to whom he confided by word of mouth and by letter the joys and sorrows of his love, Ernst Wolfgang Behrisch. Until his sojourn in Italy, Goethe was always in need of such an older friend to whom he could confess—Behrisch was eleven years his senior. The many violent storms of his emotional life made him long for a sympathetic soul who could pour oil upon the troubled waters, and whose cool, clear reasoning could pilot him safely between the Scylla and Charybdis of his vague desires and passionate emotions. In Leispic it was Behrisch, later Salzmann, then Merck, and at last Frau von Stein.

Behrisch, who had come to Leipsic as tutor to the twelve-year-old Count of Lindenau, and had taken lodgings in Auerbachs Hof, not far from Goethe's rooms, was one of

the oddest creatures imaginable. His very appearance was strange enough: he was spare, but well built, had marked features, especially a large nose, wore a wig from morning till night, dressed himself very neatly but always in gray, of which colour he sought an infinite number of shades, and when out walking always wore knee breeches and low shoes, a dagger at his side, and his hat under his arm, presenting a perfect type of the rococo gallant. With this subserviency to fashion and the solemn demeanour which he affected was doubly contrasted his waggish, critical nature, which joined issue with anybody and everybody. But as he did it cleverly and was not sparing of himself, he was an inexhaustible source of entertainment to his friends. With his merry satire he was more powerful than Frau Böhme and Morus in undermining Goethe's faith in the contemporary poets, showing, however, more consideration for his friend's own products, and permitting him to continue his poetic attempts on condition he should not publish anything. He promised in return to copy the poems finely and neatly for Goethe, which would be a greater honour than if they were printed. He kept his promise faithfully, though it cost him great pains. By his criticism he strengthened Goethe's aversion to the empty, laboured style, and his inclination to the natural and true. He must, therefore, have taken true delight in a lampoon, in which his young friend had made the stilted pathos of Professor Clodius the target of his wit. Goethe had veiled his satire in a laudatory poem on the pastry-cook, Händel, and had written it on a wall in Händel's house that was covered with inscriptions. Some time later, when Clodius's vapid drama, *Medon*, was received with great applause, Horn added a few verses to the poem, making it refer to the drama, and put it into circulation in this form. Soon everybody knew it, and it was also known what clique had produced it, and the well-bred society of Leipsic was not a little indignant at the originators of such an infamous libel. The feeling of indignation extended to Dresden, and soon reached the ears of Count Lindenau's father, who was greatly disturbed to

see his son's tutor involved in such an offensive affair. There were other good reasons for being dissatisfied with him. He associated with girls who, if we may believe Goethe's assurances, were indeed better than their reputation, but whose manners were, to say the least, a trifle too complaisant. He drew his friends into these associations and, as a shrewd man of the world, assumed the direction of the coterie. So his circle could not fail to fall into a certain ill repute, and it was noticed with displeasure that, even on his walks with the young Count, he was surrounded by the frivolous characters; in fact, he even took his pupil into the garden of these affable beauties. This was all whispered to the Count's father by Leipsic gossips, with the usual exaggerations, no doubt, and in October, 1767, cost Behrisch his position. Yet it was no loss to him; for his excellent qualifications procured for him a more agreeable appointment at the Court of Dessau. But the loss of this beloved Mentor caused Goethe the greatest sorrow and anger. He gave vent to his feelings in some bitter odes directed to Behrisch. In the second we read:

Ehrlicher Mann,
Fliehe dieſes Land!

Tote Sümpfe,
Dampfende Oktobernebel
Verweben ihre Ausflüſſe
Hier unzertrennlich.

Gebärort
Schädlicher Inſekten,
Mörderhöhle
Ihrer Bosheit!

Am ſchilfigten Ufer
Liegt die wolluſtige,
Flammengezüngte Schlange,
Geſtreichelt vom Sonnenſtrahl.

Fliehe ſanfte Nachtgänge
In der Mondendämmerung!
Dort halten zuckende Kröten
Zuſammenkünfte auf Kreuzwegen.*

The loss of Behrisch meant much to Goethe. His fits of passion became more frequent and more violent, and his arbitrary moods were offensive not only to Kätchen but to others of his friends.

While the alienation of his friends and those he loved was wholly unintentional and due to sudden outbursts of anger, his withdrawal from the society of professors was voluntary and premeditated. For they were gradually becoming as much of a bore to him as their lectures. If he went to call on Gellert, for example, he was asked in a whining voice whether he was regular in attendance at church, who was his confessor, and whether he had partaken of the Lord's Supper. But, as it happened, that was just the time when Wolfgang was endeavouring to rid himself of all church affiliations, and he made, accordingly, a very poor showing in the examination. The lamentations of the old man at his departure made it seem better never to return.

* Honourable man,
Flee from such a land!

Bogs decaying,
Reeking October vapours,
Inseparably commingle
Their outlets here.

Hatchery
Of noisome insects,
Villains' den
Of their malice!

In reeds by the river
Lies the insatiate
Dragon with tongue of fire,
And basks in the warmth of the sun.

Stroll not forth at evening
In the dim light of the moon!
When twitching toads are holding
Their concourse out at the crossways.

His associations with Professor Böhme, which had at one time been so valuable to him, ceased with Frau Böhme's death in February, 1767. He wrote a most cordial letter to Cornelia in her honour, saying that she had cared for him with a mother's zeal, and confessing that he had always gladly heeded her counsel, and that he had never given her offence save by his hatred of cards. But from the very beginning he had felt no real interest in her husband, and now that the tender bond between him and the professor's wife was broken, and Goethe was afraid of being scolded for not attending lectures, he began to avoid this house as well.

Beside the Schönkopfs, he kept up his intercourse with only four families: the Breitkopfs, the Obermanns, the Oesers, and the Stocks. The head of the Breitkopf family, who lived in the Silver Bear in the Universitätsstrasse, was the proprietor of the famous publishing house. He had invented the printing of music from movable types, was thoroughly educated, a lover of art, and a collector of curios. His two sons, Bernhard and Gottlob, who were students at the university while Goethe was there, were distinguished for their musical talent; and the older one composed, among other things, the music to Goethe's first published collection of lyrics, usually called the *Leipziger Liederbuch*. They had two sisters—Constanze, to whom Horn was paying court, and Wilhelmine. The Breitkopfs entertained frequently with music and theatricals. On intimate terms with them were the Obermanns, who lived nearly opposite the Schönkopfs, and who also had two daughters in the bloom of youth, one of whom played with Goethe in Lessing's *Minna* [*von Barnhelm*], which was given several times at the Obermanns' in the winter of 1767–1768. Goethe appeared in the rôle of the sergeant-major.

In an attic apartment in the Silver Bear lived Engraver Stock, who did a great deal of work for the Breitkopf firm, a good, industrious man and, although in straitened circumstances, always in the best of humour. Goethe learned etching of him and under his guidance executed several landscapes, two of which, according to Thiele—one

dedicated to his father, the other to Assessor Herrmann—may still be seen in Goethe's house in Weimar, while the original plates are kept in the Leipsic city library. He also learned wood-engraving of this modest artist, and among other things made cuts for Schönkopf's labels. Stock had married young, and his two daughters, who became very well known later—Minna, as the wife of Gottfried Körner, and Dora as the betrothed of the writer Huber—were only five and seven years of age. Goethe was a frequent visitor, and was cordially received by the little family of the artist. A charming scene from these intimate associations has been handed down to us by Friedrich Förster in the words of Frau Körner. A wrinkled master of arts gave the children daily lessons. As all were confined to one room, Goethe frequently heard the instruction. "Now it happened one day that we had to read aloud from a chapter of Esther, which seemed to him unsuitable for young girls. Goethe had listened quietly for a time; suddenly he sprang up from my father's work-table, snatched the Bible from my hand and called out to the tutor with furious voice: 'Sir, how can you let these little girls read such stories!' The master trembled and quaked; for Goethe continued his lecture with more and more severity, till mother stepped between them and sought to pacify him. The master stammered something about God's word being all plain, at which Goethe quoted to him: 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' Then he opened the New Testament, turned over the leaves for a moment, until he had found what he was looking for. 'Here, Dorchen,' he said to my sister, 'read this to us. This is the Sermon on the Mount; we will all listen to you.' As Dorchen stammered and was too frightened to read, Goethe took the Bible from her and read us the whole chapter, adding some very edifying remarks, such as we had never heard from our tutor." As a reward for such a service of love he very readily allowed Frau Stock to comb his tangled hair, which hung down in heavy brown locks.

Far more important than all the associations above

mentioned was that with Friedrich Oeser, director of the Academy of Painting, which was at that time located in the Pleissenburg. Goethe took instruction under him in order to perfect himself in drawing and painting. What he really received, however, was more than mere help in technique. Oeser was not a very talented artist, but he had a fine, and, for his time, very exceptional, appreciation of art. It was probably he from whom Winckelmann first learned the secret of the Greek idea of beauty, and so of all beauty, as was long thought, viz., "noble simplicity and quiet greatness." This ideal, which had the effect of a purging bath upon the rococo, was the constant theme of Oeser's theoretical teaching, and, although he could not rid himself of the prevailing mannerism, yet he turned Goethe away from the shallowness and unnaturalness of the rococo to a pure and deep conception of things. Goethe acknowledged this extraordinary service of Oeser's in profound gratitude. After returning to Frankfort he writes to his teacher: "How greatly I am indebted to you, dearest professor, that you have shown me the way to the true and the beautiful! . . . My love of the beautiful, my knowledge, my insight, did I not get them all from you? What a certainty, what a shining truth the strange and almost incomprehensible statement has proven to be, that the studio of a great artist is a better place to develop a budding philosopher or a budding poet than the lecture-room of a philosopher or a critic!" And to Oeser's amiable and clever daughter Friederike, whom he met at her father's apartments in the Pleissenburg, and at their country home in Dölitz, and to whom he liked to go whenever he felt blue, to be cheered by her optimistic philosophy, he writes: "A great scholar . . . is likely to despise the simple book of nature, and yet nothing is true that is not simple. Whoever follows the simple path, let him go on his way in silence. . . . I thank your dear father for it; he first prepared my soul for this style."

Oeser also made accessible to him the cabinets and portfolios of the Leipsic lovers of art, Huber, Kreuchauf,

Winkler, and Richter, and in this way not only widened his horizon, but also developed in him a feeling for the conditionality of works of art. As his thoughts had been strongly deflected in another direction by Lessing's *Laokoon*, which had appeared shortly before, it was natural that the desire should arise in him to test and further train his eye and his insight by the study of the rich art treasures of Dresden. Early in March, 1768, he made a pilgrimage to the Saxon capital, and in order to be under no restraint, and at the same time mindful of his father's warning to avoid the robbery of hotels, he engaged lodgings at the house of a cobbler, a relative of the theological student Limprecht, who occupied the room next to his in Leipsic. The honest cobbler, a practical philosopher, fond of work and perfectly satisfied with his narrow circumstances, afforded the student the greatest amusement with his original, witty, and ready speech, and as Goethe tried to assume the same manner toward the cheerful philosopher, he engaged in his turn the good will of his landlord. While he was happy over his choice of lodgings, in spite of their modesty and simplicity, the picture gallery, the chief aim of his journey, surpassed all his expectations. Even the splendour and purity of the architecture, the shining floors, the dazzling frames, the solemn stillness over all, inspired him with wonder and reverence. But above everything else the paintings. He could not look at them enough, and took advantage of every available hour to lose himself in their contemplation. The Dutch paintings especially captivated him. He was prepared for them by his art studies at home and in Leipsic, and they satisfied his longing for nature and the real. Upon the Italians,[27] on the other hand, for whom he had as yet no real standard of judgment, he bestowed only passing attention, accepting their value more from his confidence in others than from his own conviction. He was presented by another visitor to the director-general of the gallery, Herr von Hagedorn, who showed him his private collections, and heartily enjoyed the enthusiasm of the young lover of art.

Goethe did not examine the antique art at Dresden, because, he says, he felt his inability to master even the picture gallery. Another reason may have been the bad way in which the works were displayed in the pavilions and sheds of the park (Grosser Garten), which made a real study of them scarcely possible. For in Dresden at that time antiquities were valued only as aristocratic garden decorations. After a sojourn of twelve days, Goethe departed from Dresden—"glorious Dresden"—richly laden with knowledge of art history and esthetics.

# VI

## LITERARY INFLUENCES AND POETIC CREATIONS

Literary poverty of the age—Influence of Lessing—Wieland—Shakespeare—Other studies—Fertility—*Die Laune des Verliebten*—*Die Mitschuldigen*—Aversion to tragedy—*Annette*—*Neue Lieder*—Traditional style—Occasional poems—Improvement in style—Illness—Kindness of friends.

THE last semester opened. Goethe's attendance at lectures showed no improvement. The first and real purpose of university study he had missed. And yet, when looking back over his years in Leipsic, he had reason to be very well satisfied. Although he was noticeably absent from lectures and not only sipped but drank deep of the cup of life's joys, yet he did not squander his days in idle pleasure. Nominally he was still a student of law, but actually he devoted all his hours of study to the whole wide realm of fine arts and belles-lettres. Whatever came to him in this way he received with keen delight. No matter how arduous the labor of acquisition, no matter how much study, practice, or reading was involved, his zeal never flagged.

We have already indicated how earnestly he sought to attain knowledge and proficiency, judgment and taste, in the field of the fine arts. Of more importance here are his literary studies, to which we shall now turn our attenion.

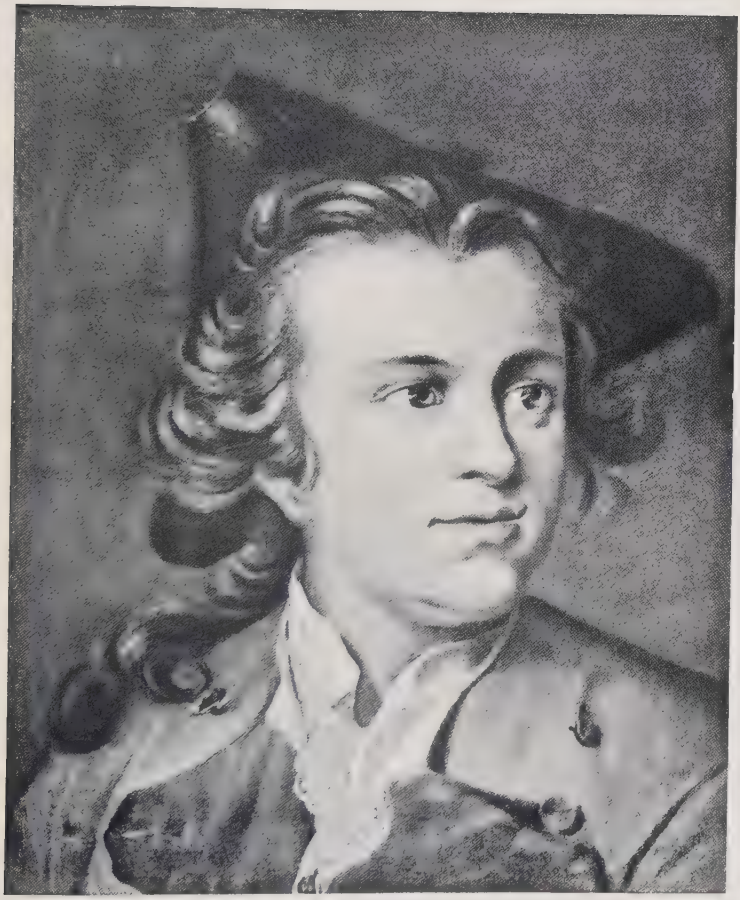
In his autobiography Goethe never wearies of describing the literary poverty of the age in which his youth fell. Now he calls it watery, prolix, inane; again he speaks of Gottsched's watery waste, which almost submerged everything; again, of the barren imitation of the shallow and the watery,

from which scarcely an idea has survived; again, of the watery flood about the German Parnassus, most perfectly typified in Bodmer's *Noachide*. Wherever he turned his eyes, water, water, nothing but water. But wherever the water had subsided, he beheld before him the broad, flat plain, here and there covered over with a neat, trim little garden, while his heart longed for towering mountains, friendly valleys, and dark forests.

Goethe, who, with the instinct of a great genius, felt a yearning for mighty men of innate originality of thought, feeling, and action, found everywhere nothing but prosaic, timorous, pedantic Philistines, or, where there had been a departure from reality, sentimental and prudish shepherdesses, who led their lambs about by a pink ribbon while their languishing shepherds in gorgeous array discoursed sweet music on the flute. The Dresden china of those days gives a general idea of the taste of the period. For china it may have been tolerable, but for poetry it was outrageous.

Few indeed were those who could offer the growing giant anything better. Lessing appealed strongly to his reason. On the threshold of old age Goethe spoke with the greatest enthusiasm of the benefit he had received from Lessing's writings during his student days. He compares *Laokoon* with a ray of light which descended upon him through dark clouds. "From the region of limited observation he transported us to the free fields of thought. The dogma, '*Ut pictura poesis*,'* so long misunderstood, was done away with; the distinction between sculpture and painting on the one hand, and poetry on the other, was made clear, and the branches of both now appeared divergent, no matter how close together lay their roots. The sculptor and the painter should keep within the bounds of the beautiful, even if the poet, who must make use of everything of importance, is at liberty to transgress them. The sculptor and the painter appeal to the outer sense, which is satisfied only by the beautiful; the poet to the

* The reference is to Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 361: "Ut pictura poesis: erit quæ, si propius stes, te capiat magis," etc.—C.



LESSING

(From Könnecke's *Bilderatlas*)

imagination, which is able to endure the ugly. We saw all the consequences of this great idea illuminated as it were by a sudden flash of lightning, and all the descriptions and opinions of previous criticism were cast aside like a wornout garment."

Farther on Goethe again praises the supreme force of these fundamental, comprehensive ideas, which bore such abundant fruit in the impressionable minds of Lessing's contemporaries.

Hence there is no room to doubt that Goethe felt his intellectual development extraordinarily advanced by *Laokoon*. But the result cannot have come from those sentences which Goethe especially emphasises in this connection. For that the sculptor and the painter must keep within the bounds of the beautiful, by which Lessing meant ideal beauty of form, is a principle which Lessing, under the spell of Grecian ideals, vigorously defends; but it is not one of his fundamental principles, nor does it necessarily follow from them. Least of all can Goethe have approved of the feeling which led Lessing to look askance upon the paintings of the Dutch school and relegate landscape and portraiture, as inferior imitations, to the second rank. For it would bring his enthusiasm for the Dutch, his indifference toward the Italians, his deep interest in landscape and portrait, and his then ideal of beauty,[28] in no wise comprehended by harmonious line, into irreconcilable contradiction. We may rather suppose that young Goethe saw wherein Lessing's idea of beauty was lacking. He was, however, carried away by the masterly clearness with which Lessing made the distinction between poetry and painting, and dispelled the harmful confusion brought about by the theory that the two were on an equality. The chief fundamental teachings, that the two arts are compelled by their difference in resources to represent different things and in different ways, that painting is limited to form and poetry to action, and that painting can only suggest action through form, while poetry can only suggest form through action—these fundamental teachings must

have been, to the youthful Goethe trying to grope his way out of the prevailing darkness, a flash of lightning dispelling the gloom and revealing the obstacles that had blocked his path. These new ideas had brought condemnation on two things simultaneously: in literature, descriptive poetry, which claimed so many victims at that time; in painting, allegorising, in which the age, with Oeser in the lead, was revelling, and which Winckelmann had declared to be the highest mission of modern art. Furthermore, the theory of the suggestive moment in painting, and of the representation of physical beauty in poetry, the keen insight into Homeric art, and many other clever details, as well as the terse style, unique in German literature, and yet so brilliant and dramatic, must have contributed to the young man's enthusiasm.

Goethe makes no express mention of Lessing's other great critical work, the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*,[29] the greater part of which had appeared before April, 1768. And yet there can be no doubt that while a student he read it, and drew from it a large measure of information and enjoyment. The struggle against unnaturalness, against stiff regularity, against flatness, triviality, and mawkish sentimentality, the appreciation of the peculiarly national (Hanswurst), the defence of the sovereignty of genius, the constant reference to Shakespeare as the incomparable model, all of this must have impressed the young man deeply and added to his instinctive sympathy with these views the light of clear knowledge.

The *Literaturbriefe*, too, may have first come to Goethe's knowledge at this time, and Lessing's bold statement that there were scenes in the despised folk-book of *Doctor Faust* worthy of a Shakespeare doubtless found an echo in his mind. Indeed it may be that this opinion opened his eyes for the first time to the depth and dramatic possibilities of the material. Beside Lessing's critical works there was a poetical production, which Goethe greeted with great joy, *Minna von Barnhelm*. Even if the young student probably did not as yet grasp with the clear consciousness of the

mature man the value of *Minna* as the first drama drawn from significant life, yet he certainly did feel keenly that in it the nation received a dramatic gift far overtowering all others. For it was the exposition of this drama which he studied in order to get useful guidance for *Die Mitschuldigen.* It was perhaps also at his suggestion that the excellent piece was performed on the stage of the Breitkopf-Obermann family theatre so soon after its publication.

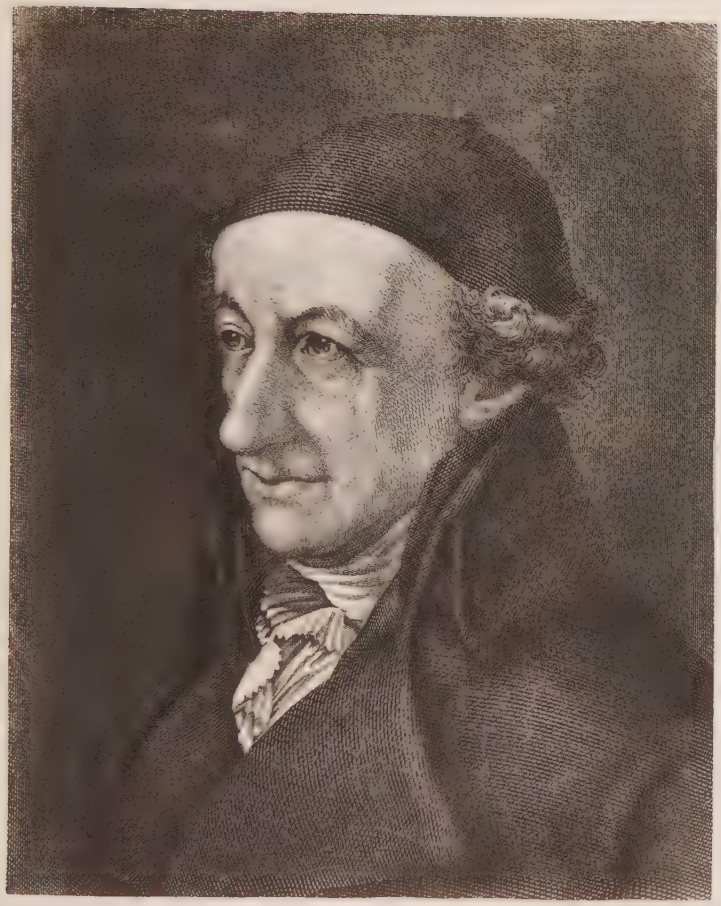
It is no contradiction to this broad and profound influence of Lessing when Goethe in a letter to the Leipsic bookseller, Reich (February 20, 1770), mentions only Oeser, Shakespeare, and Wieland as his real teachers. The additional remark: "Others had shown me my shortcomings, these showed me how to overcome them," makes the statement comprehensible. Lessing's critical works had clarified and enlarged his vision, showing him his own shortcomings, but the poetical writings which were to show him the way of overcoming them were for him inimitable. From Lessing's lucid clearness, epigrammatic style, and sharp delineation he was separated by an impassable chasm. For him beauty lay in the mysterious blending of the finite and the infinite, in exuberance of life, in saturated colour. So he may well have felt capable of attaining the cheerful ease, the pleasing gracefulness of Wieland and the daring, passionate depth of Shakespeare; but Lessing's poetry lay in a world to which at the outset he must have thought it vain to seek to find a way.

"Of all writers Wieland possessed the most beautiful nature," says Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit.* This shows that he considered Wieland's nature most closely akin to his own. Otherwise we should find it difficult to explain the admiration which the growing young man had for him. For much as Wieland towered like a stately mountain above the watery waste of Gottsched, Gellert, and Weisse, and much as Goethe must have appreciated his advance beyond them in style, in characterisation, and in the deepening of motives, none the less such weaknesses as the garrulity, the effeminacy, the lack of seriousness, the

critical digressions, the prolix discussions of superficialities, which characterise Wieland's writings from 1764 to 1768, cannot have escaped the eye of the youth who had enjoyed Lessing and Shakespeare. But young Goethe was indebted to the graceful poet and conversationalist for his free, facile, man-of-the-world spirit, peculiar to the Suabian poet and so rare in native writers, for his enjoyment of sensuous delights, and for his attempt to give this element of life pleasing poetical expression, that harmonised the sensuous and the spiritual. If Goethe in his old age lays special emphasis on the effect of *Musarion* upon him, and attributes it to his belief that in it he saw antiquity living and breathing again, this circumstance may have contributed to his enthusiasm; but there can be no doubt that his impression was deepened by the fact that he, a moody lover, saw his relation to Kätchen reflected with striking resemblance in the relation between Phanias and the heroine in the first book of *Musarion*. Shortly after his Leipsic period Goethe became a severe critic of Wieland's art, but he built upon its beautiful peculiarities nevertheless, and *Wilhelm Meister* and *Römische Elegien* were erected upon this foundation.

Beside Lessing and Wieland there remains only Klopstock who might have exerted a determining influence upon Goethe. But Klopstock's era was past. He had filled the boy with enthusiasm, but was unable to hold the young man under his spell except in matters of language and rhythm.* Klopstock's seraphic tendency was paralysed by Wieland's trivial muse, while his patriotic vein had become odious to our student because of the bardic blare of his imitators. The war songs of Gleim and Ramler were more to his liking, because they had sprung from deeds and had the true inward ring. The plays of the Leipsic district-tax-

* *Werther* and the poems of the Wetzlar period show the strong influence of Klopstock's poetic thought and feeling. *Cf.* Lyon, *Goethes Verhältnis zu Klopstock* (Leipsic diss.). The influence as seen in the lyrics is clearly pointed out by Goebel in the commentary of his selections from *Goethe's Poems*, a work to which I feel I ought to refer, inasmuch as Bielschowsky said that no man since Loeper had shown as deep an understanding of Goethe's lyrics as Professor Goebel.—C.



*Wieland*

*from an engraving by W. Steinla*
*after the portrait by F. Jagemann*

collector, Weisse, with whom he became personally acquainted, he enjoyed seeing on the stage, without being deceived by their insignificance.

But however disparaging may have been his opinions of the great mass of German poets, as a result of his own and others' criticism, nevertheless, according to indications, he took cognisance of all literary productions which appeared in the market. This immoderate fondness for reading was responsible for the basketfuls of German authors, which, in his last or next to last semester, he carried to Langer, Behrisch's successor, to exchange for a little pile of Greek writers whom, under the influence of Oeser, Winckelmann, and Lessing, he had begun to admire as the true models. But for the present his Greek studies did not extend beyond the formation of good resolutions.

His familiarity with modern foreign literatures was also constantly increasing. He found Goldoni continually at the Leipsic theatre, Corneille he attempted to translate, Rousseau appears occasionally in his letters, but he is captivated most of all by Shakespeare. He delights in reading Wieland's translation, after his appetite has been sharpened by Dodd's *Beauties of Shakespeare*. To be sure, his angle of vision is still too narrow to grasp the gigantic greatness of the British poet, even if he does quote him constantly and bewail his love sorrows in Shakespearian allegories. But he foresees the leavening power of this new influence when, a short time after his Leipsic period, he counts Shakespeare among his real teachers.

It was not in Goethe, with the universal mind which Nature had given him and his father had carefully nurtured, to limit his studies to art and belles-lettres. He ranged far beyond, and took a live interest in general works on theology, medicine, law, and philosophy. He became especially wrapped up in the theological controversy over the divine or human authorship of the Bible, and as a Leipsic convert to rationalism he took the liberal view.

Thus Goethe in six academic semesters had acquired an uncommon store of varied information. He was not yet

Faust, but the student who knew much and would like to know all.

His comprehensive higher education was not accompanied by a corresponding clearness of feeling and knowledge. On the contrary, the opposing schools and doctrines with which he was beset had brought his brain into a chaotic condition, from which he rescued himself but slowly.

Aside from *Die Mitschuldigen*, his productions betray little of the inner crisis. They did not go deep enough to be caught by the mad whirlpools beneath. From the discouraging criticism of Morus, Clodius, and Frau Böhme his recovery was rapid. His poetic impulse was so unconquerable that no doubts of his talent and of his achievement could suppress it. He took up writing again, which became from now on an ever-increasing need of his intellectual life. For in Leipsic "began that inclination," as he remarks in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, "to transform everything which pleased, annoyed, or otherwise occupied me, into a picture or a poem, and thus to put the matter aside, at the same time correcting my ideas of external things and restoring my peace of mind." To be sure, not everything he produces in Leipsic bears as yet this stamp. For by the side of poetical confessions runs the artificial poetry then in vogue, and this is evidently received with greater applause by his friends than that which was born of his heart.

Poetic activity strengthened again the young man's faith in his genius, and he speaks of the criticisms which he receives with cool composure. "Since I am wholly without pride," he writes to his sister in May, 1767, "I can trust my inner conviction, which tells me that I possess some of the qualifications requisite in a poet, and that I may some day with diligence become one. . . . I wish people would leave me alone. If I have genius, I shall become a poet, even if no man correct me; if I have none, all criticisms are in vain." With this calm trust in himself he produces, especially in his last two years in Leipsic, an ever-increasing host of compositions: comedies, tragedies, songs, epigrams,

satires, odes, dithyrambs, poems to accompany etchings and drawings, novels in letters, and so forth. Of this great mass only a few things have been preserved.

Let us first consider the two most extensive productions, *Die Laune des Verliebten* and *Die Mitschuldigen*.

*Die Laune des Verliebten*,[30] or *Amine*, as the piece was first called, did not originate in its earliest form in Leipsic, but in Frankfort. In this form it was apparently nothing but an improbable, unreal, pastoral drama constructed after the usual pattern, and Goethe was ashamed of it two years later and recast it completely, when he learned from experience what he had previously sought to fabricate out of abstractions. Consequently, his statement that the piece, as we know it, sprang from his relation to Kätchen is thoroughly accurate. Indeed we may assume that it corresponds to the reality in a greater degree than we are able to prove. The poet certainly declares to his sister that it is a careful copy from nature. He took unusual pains with the little play of five hundred verses. In October, 1767, he had been at work at it for eight months; he had not minded working over whole situations two or three times, but when he thought he had finished, he had made only a fair beginning. Thus the second redaction passed through the crucible so often that scarcely a hundred verses of it were left. Finally, in April, 1768, he puts the work aside. "There you have the comedy," he writes to Behrisch; "you will hardly recognise it. Horn insists that I make no more changes in it for fear of spoiling it, and he is about right."

Two couples are contrasted with each other: Eridon (Goethe) and Amine (Kätchen), Lamon and Egle (probably suggested by Horn and Constanze Breitkopf). Lamon and Egle are mutually trustful, and by granting each other a certain amount of liberty enjoy an undisturbed lovers' happiness. Eridon and Amine, inflamed with a deeper, more passionate love, cannot enjoy their happiness, because Eridon persecutes Amine with jealous mistrust and will grant her no pleasure of which he is not the source. Egle

attempts to incite her friend Amine to resist the tyrannical moods of Eridon. But her gentle friend feels too weak for the task, and so Egle herself undertakes to cure the lover of his jealousy. She lures the severe moraliser into her arms and makes him kiss her and then makes him ashamed and reforms him.

The intrigue is ingenious and the unravelling clever. At the very moment when Eridon is wildly enraged over a merely seeming but wholly innocent betrayal on the part of Amine, he himself becomes guilty of a real and more culpable one, for which he atones in shame and remorse.

We are surprised at the youthful poet's art in keeping the four characters distinct from one another: Lamon, sane, somewhat superficial, jovial, dauntless; Egle, clever, fluent, good-natured, coquettish; Eridon, peevish, moody, carping, passionate, easily captivated by any beautiful maiden; and finally Amine, tender, affectionate, devoted, her pure heart, like Iphigenia's, incapable of dissimulation, or the slightest unfaithfulness or deception, even if they are only the means to the purest end. We observe only one fault in the delineation of the characters—in Eridon. His character is clear-cut but not complete. In order that we may understand why Amine is unwilling, in spite of his petty tyranny, to dismiss her moody lover, the poet ought to have given him, beside his whimsicalness, brilliant genius and, in his good moments, bewitching amiability. That Goethe failed to do this is explained by the fact that he was both poet and model. Absorbed in giving a lifelike reproduction of himself he overlooked the poetical aspect of his nature. We meet this same thing occasionally in his later poetic doubles. Goethe disguised his piece under the mask of the traditional pastoral play. But it was as different from contemporary or preceding plays as a living man from a porcelain figure.

Whereas *Die Laune des Verliebten* belongs to the Frankfort period only in general outline, *Die Mitschuldigen* [31] is firmly rooted in the soil of his native city. The poet himself says: "How many families had I not seen hurled into ruin, or barely rescued from the very brink, either directly

or indirectly by bankruptcies, divorces, betrayed daughters, murders, burglaries, or poisonings; and how often I, young as I was, had in such cases extended a hand to help or to rescue, . . . in doing which I could not well avoid the annoying and humiliating experiences which came to me directly, and indirectly through others. In order to give vent to my feelings I devised several plays and wrote out the expositions of most of them. But as the plots were always of necessity terrifying and almost all threatened a tragic end, I let them drop one after another." He kept at *Die Mitschuldigen* until he finished it, because he thought he might bring this problem to a happy solution; whether rightly or no may be seriously questioned, considering the plot. To his daughter Sophie, twenty-four years of age and still unmarried, the keeper of the Black Bear has at last given for a husband the dissipated wretch, Söller, who is deeply involved in debt. The innkeeper's hopes that his son-in-law will reform after marriage are bitterly disappointed. From morning till night he sits like an idiot in the taproom and drinks his fill of his father-in-law's wine, or gambles in other inns till late at night and in the morning listens stupidly to the reproaches of the family. At the beginning of the action, one of his companions, Herr von Tirinette, sends him a reminder of his gambling debts. Söller, who, after Sophie's sermon on his evil business habits, has no hope of receiving anything from his father-in-law, does not hesitate long. A distinguished guest, Alcest, formerly an admirer of Sophie, has arrived. In the night, while Alcest is supposed to be at a carnival banquet and everybody thinks Söller at the masquerade, he intends to get the money from the rich guest's purse. On the other hand, Alcest, who has sought in vain to catch an hour when he could be alone with Sophie, arranges a rendezvous with her that evening in his room. Finally, the landlord is painfully curious about a letter which Alcest has received. To satisfy his curiosity he is going to look into the letter in Alcest's absence in the evening. Söller is the first to appear in the room, but hardly has he stolen the money from the

purse, when he is scared into the alcove by the approach of the landlord. The landlord, after a vain search for the letter, flees at the sound of steps. It is Sophie, soon followed by Alcest. There develops a warm love-scene, which Sophie quickly brings to an end when Alcest becomes too impetuous. While he is accompanying her to the main door, Söller escapes by a side entrance. Alcest notices the theft and sounds an alarm in the morning. Sophie and her father have mutually confessed meanwhile that they have been in Alcest's room in the evening, and each thinks the other is the thief. By a promise to show the eagerly desired letter, Alcest persuades the landlord to denounce his daughter as the culprit. Alcest is disgusted with Sophie's depravity, but is none the less bent upon accomplishing his purpose with her. Soon he sees his mistake and discovers in Söller the real criminal. But as the innocent ones are also conscious of guilt, they, as accomplices, headed by Alcest, forgive the common thief, Söller.

The development of the plot shows that the young poet was neither morally nor artistically equal to the subject. When, in a later criticism of himself, he says this piece offends our esthetic and moral feelings, this severe judgment is correct; but not merely, as he remarks, "because of the harshly outspoken [meaning, doubtless, insufficiently accounted for] criminal acts of the characters," but still more because of the contradictions in their conduct. The poet expects too much of us. We are to believe that Sophie, an excellent creature, a model of virtue, who represented, in the eyes of cultured Alcest, divinity, girl, and friend, accepted as a husband that monster, that brute, that stupid, malicious, cowardly, lying vagabond, Söller, merely because she was twenty-four and had "no more chances to lose." We are to believe that Alcest cherishes the highest respect for Sophie, and yet believes the worst of her; believe that he has a great and noble soul, and yet conducts himself like a criminal, and from his crime will pluck sweet fruits for himself; that a father, whose daughter is everything to him in his circumstances, denounces her as a thief

for no other reason than to satisfy his miserable, idle curiosity. We cannot do it. Hence it is also impossible for us to be reconciled to the happy end, where they all shake hands as accomplices. This scoundrel Söller ought to have been kicked out when he had crowned his moral depravity and infamous laziness by common thievery. To be sure, that would have precluded a happy outcome, but it was a fatal mistake in the poet to work toward such an end. This fault, however, brings us to the recognition of a deep-seated characteristic of the poet, especially in his early life. Just as he discarded the dramatic plots belonging to the same cycle of motives as *Die Mitschuldigen* because of the threatened tragic end, so also the countless other tragic plots which occupied him in his youth. Not until several years later did he have the courage to undertake tragedy; but even then, when he himself is personally involved, he seeks to avoid a tragic outcome. The most conspicuous example is *Stella*. He had inherited from his mother a desire to keep away from the sad and terrible. A smaller man would not have suffered from the same peculiarities in poetry as in life, but with him the two were one.

Another remarkable thing about *Die Mitschuldigen* is the fact that he veiled his work on this drama in the deepest secrecy. While he is constantly chatting about the pastoral play, and about dozens of unfinished plots, either to his sister or to his friends, he is completely silent about *Die Mitschuldigen*. And yet he seems to have been rather proud of the work. At least he later gave a copy of it to Friederike Brion.

In our condemnation of the play we must not fail to state that it contains beside its radical faults many things which evoke our respect for the poet's talent. The rapidly moving action, the Dutch miniature-painting of the first act, the comical situations and language, among other things, betray his rare gifts.

Both *Die Laune des Verliebten* and *Die Mitschuldigen* show the old technique of the French stage and the old form, the Alexandrine. The latter is especially surprising,

as Goethe at the age of sixteen made sport of the Alexandrine and in the fifth act of *Belsazar* (of which only a few lines survive) had gone over to the iambic pentameter. We observe the same loyalty to tradition in *Annette*,[32] a collection of poems made in 1767 and only recently discovered, and in *Neue Lieder*,[33] which he published anonymously in 1769 with music by Bernhard Breitkopf. They are conceived in the traditional, even if less mawkish phraseology, and in the powdered, affected style of the German and French anacreontic, and, worst of all, are for the most part artificial: clever conceits on love, virtue, coyness, moonlight, bridal night, way of the world, here and there adorned with precocious didactic remarks, which sound droll enough in the mouth of our young student.

If we ask why Goethe, in spite of all adverse criticism, in spite of knowing better, followed the old ways, the explanation is near at hand. Nobody likes to forego applause. Not yet brave and strong enough to win over the public to something new, in the poems which he intends for the public he remains faithful to popular taste. That Goethe was subject to such external pressure, even through the medium of his friends, who were his nearest critical and reading public, we can assert with the greater security, as we possess other specimens of his Leipsic lyrics, which he dashed off without any other purpose than to relieve his feelings. A few of the finest of them we have already interwoven in our discussion, as from the odes to Behrisch, from letters to him and to Riese. Here we will mention further the poem addressed to Schlosser (from the spring of 1766), in which he expresses, in sad English verse, his tormenting doubts as to his worth as man and poet; and these touching verses to his mother (May, 1767), in which he begs her not to misinterpret his long silence:

. . . Laß keinen Zweifel doch
Ins Herz, als wär die Zärtlichkeit des Sohns,
Die ich Dir ſchuldig bin, aus meiner Bruſt
Entwichen. Nein, ſo wenig als der Fels,

Der tief im Fluß, vor ewgem Anker liegt,
Aus seiner Stätte weicht, obgleich die Flut
Mit stürmschen Wellen bald, mit sanften bald
Darüber fließt, und ihn dem Aug entreißt,
So wenig weicht die Zärtlichkeit für dich
Aus meiner Brust, obgleich des Lebens Strom,
Vom Schmerz gepeitscht, bald stürmend drüber fließt,
Und, von der Freude bald gestreichelt, still
Sie deckt, und sie verhindert, daß sie nicht
Ihr Haupt der Sonne zeigt und ringsumher
Zurückgeworfne Strahlen trägt und Dir
Bey jedem Blicke zeigt, wie Dich Dein Sohn verehrt.*

When we consider the genuine feeling of these occasional poems, we receive an entirely different conception of Goethe's Leipsic lyrics than that derived from *Annette* and the *Neue Lieder*. There are in them an ardour, a depth, and a genuineness of feeling united with a beauty, a power, and a vigour of style which we find in the other collections very rarely or not at all. How little they remind us of the very young student and of the esthetic atmosphere in which he had grown up and which he still breathed! How far they surpassed even Klopstock, not to mention others! There is no doubt whatever that all the German lyric poetry of the time had nothing of equal merit to put beside these poems quietly inserted in his letters.

* . . . Ope not thy heart to doubt,
As though the tender love I owe to thee,
In filial reverence as thy son, were gone
From out my breast. As little as the rock,
Deep anchored in the river's tide, doth e'er
Its moorings change, though oft the water's flood
Now breaks in stormy waves, now gently glides
Above, about, withholding it from view;
So little doth my tender love for thee
Forsake my breast, e'en though the stream of life
Now, scourged by pain, engulf it in the storm,
Now, smoothed by joy, serenely overflow,
With gentle waves conceal, and it forbid
To lift its head into the light above
To shed reflected rays abroad and tell
By every look how much I thee adore.

Neither did Goethe neglect epic poetry in Leipsic. For Gellert's composition course, for example, he prepared short novels in epistolary form,[34] depicting passionate love-scenes. The less favour they found in the eyes of the teacher the dearer they were to the pupil, and he preserved them from the holocaust to which, before his departure for Strasburg, he devoted the most of his Leipsic attempts. But whatever there may have been in the way of epic compositions among those destroyed or later lost, it is certain that nothing equalled the soul-stirring love-story, tingling with pulsations of life, which in his hours of emotion slipped from his fingers in his letters to Behrisch.

If Goethe, like his later friend, Jung-Stilling, had believed that he stood in immediate personal relationship with God, it would be easily comprehended. For in a wonderful manner the events of his life, the happy as well as the sorrowful, unite to form a great, harmonious whole. Thus he might have considered it a wise decree of fate, that at the end of his Leipsic epoch he contracted a long and severe illness. For it was necessary that the moral and intellectual confusion into which he had fallen, because of the thousand new and conflicting influences to which he had been subjected, should be corrected by a period of isolation, enforced rest, and self-examination.

By his own account there were many things which conspired to bring a dangerous crisis upon him. In an accident to his carriage on the journey to Leipsic, he had overtaxed his lungs and a lingering pain had resulted, which became more acute after a fall from his horse in October, 1767; while etching, he had not been careful enough in guarding against the fumes of the acids; the trouble was further aggravated by an improper diet, by the heavy Merseburg beer, and by inconsiderate attempts to harden his body, partly out of wantonness, partly out of melancholy, and partly out of a bad application of new theories *à la* Rousseau. A violent reaction indicated by a hemorrhage set in and for days he hovered between life and death. He spent several weeks in bed and required most careful nursing. As a soothing

balsam upon a painful wound he felt the love and sympathy manifested about him and which he thought was undeserved, for among those who took loving care of him there was not one whom he had not offended in some way or other by his hateful moods. The entire Breitkopf family, the Stocks, and, we may well add, the Schönkopfs and the Oesers treated him as a near relative. Horn was about him every moment, Assessor Herrmann gave him every free hour, likewise Langer, Gröning (a fellow-student from Bremen, later ambassador and mayor of the Hanse town), and others whom he does not mention by name, took a warm interest in his welfare. They nursed him, they amused him, when convalescent they took him driving to the near-by country-seats, and bestowed upon him everything else that promised relief or refreshment. Thus he gradually recovered strength. But he was far from having regained his former health when on his birthday in the year 1768 he left Leipsic to return home. He could not persuade himself to bid the Schönkopfs good-bye. "I was in the neighbourhood," he writes to Schönkopf from Frankfort, "I was even at the door and came to the stairs, but I had not the heart to come up. How should I ever have gotten down for the last time? I do not need to ask you to remember me; you will have a thousand occasions to think of a young man, who for two and a half years was a part of your family, who, no doubt, often gave you cause for vexation, but was, nevertheless, a good young fellow."

## VII

### AT HOME AGAIN

Return from Leipsic—Family discord—Dulness of Frankfort—Slow recovery of health—Fräulein von Klettenberg's influence—Study of magic—Alchemistical experiments—Other studies—Misunderstanding with his father—Departure for Strasburg.

WITH what proud hopes the elder Goethe must have seen his highly gifted son setting out for the university three years before, and in what a condition he saw him return! An ill and senile youth,* without his doctor's hood, indeed without any notable advancement in his specialty. Everything seemed lost: time, money, health, study. And so his return to his father's house was marked by a stormy scene, foreshadowing the oppressive sultriness of the succeeding months. Wolfgang found in his home nothing to stimulate him. In the little family there were two parties quietly opposing each other, and consequently all the inmates were out of sorts, which served only to increase his ill-humour. His father, who was not practising any profession, had devoted his entire educational energy to Cornelia during her brother's absence, and in that way robbed her of many an innocent joy of youth. She, the strangest combination of severity and gentleness, of stubbornness and obedience, endowed with a most acute critical faculty, which mercilessly exaggerated her own and others' faults, could not pardon her father's harsh one-sidedness, and was filled with violent anger against him, as

* Cf. *Br.*, i., 171: Kann man was traurigers erfahren? Am Körper alt, und jung an Jahren, Halb siech, und halb gesund zu seyn?—C.

was only too apparent in her actions. On the other hand, she turned with all the more abandon the tender, loving side of her nature toward her brother, whom she had dearly loved from earliest childhood, and to live and care for him seemed to be her highest and happiest duty. Into his heart she poured also the many complaints which she had treasured up during the three years of separation. And yet her brother could not help her, much less approve of her conduct. He felt compelled rather to agree with his mother, who, soon after his return, complained to him of Cornelia's unkind actions toward her father. Thus he, who was in need of help, stood between the nearest of his kin, while they burdened his sore heart with complaints against each other or with silent reproaches such as he read in his father's eyes.

Neither had his native city anything to console him. As compared with the cheerfulness and gaiety of Leipsic, with its merry, active life and its amiable inhabitants, whose weaknesses were now softened by distance, Frankfort seemed to him more gloomy, more dull, more leaden than ever before. So it was his chief delight to tarry in thought by the banks of the Pleisse, and the lively correspondence which he kept up with friends there is filled with sighs of longing for the fair "Little Paris."

The rest and care which Goethe enjoyed at home at first rapidly promoted his recovery. But soon new complications arose, which, on Cornelia's birthday, December seventh, brought about such a crisis that for two days his life was despaired of. His mother and he never forgot these terrible days, and even after decades they remembered how she in her despair had taken refuge in the Bible and found comfort in the passage: "Again shalt thou plant vineyards upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit thereof." But even when the crisis was past there was many another serious hour when the family drooped their heads in sorrow. Goethe alone preserved a buoyant spirit. "My cheerfulness," he writes to Kätchen at the end of the year, "has been a comfort to

my people, who were in no condition to console themselves, much less me."

Until the following March the patient was confined either to his bed or to his room. During the succeeding months his health was constantly on the mend, but still necessitated a quiet, retired life. Painful though the quiet lonesomeness was to the poor little fox,* as he liked to call himself in those days, yet it afforded him an opportunity to continue the process of clarification and deepening already begun in his sickroom in Leipsic. After he had twice been brought to "the great strait through which all must pass," he renounced the cold rationalism, and, still more decidedly, the sceptical negation to which he had lent a listening ear in the past years, and turned to a more positive faith in God and the world. This process of transformation was helped on by the influence of tender, pious Fräulein Susanna Katharina von Klettenberg, a friend and relative of his mother. After Fräulein von Klettenberg had gone through many painful worldly experiences and disappointments she had found peace and joy of soul in the doctrines of Moravianism. Goethe saw with admiration how she bore with composure everything, even chronic illness, regarding it a necessary part of her transitory life on earth. He was glad to come into touch with such an exalted, or, as the poet calls her, beautiful soul, that breathed the air of heaven; and it did him good to unbosom himself to her and lay bare before her his unrest, his impatience, and all the aspirations, meditations, and weaknesses of his heart. When his pious friend ascribed it all to his lack of reconciliation with God, and he half jokingly retorted that he believed he himself had some things to forgive, for God should have lent more efficient aid to his infinitely good will, the conversation usually ended in a dispute, or with the remark of Fräulein von Klettenberg that "he was a foolish fellow." Nevertheless these conversations left behind fruitful suggestions, which Goethe followed out, until

* An allusion to the fox of the fable who lost his tail. *Cf.* Hagedorn, *Fab. u. Erz.*, i., No. 6, *Der Fuchs ohne Schwanz.*—C.

he had constructed for himself a curious half-Christian, half-mythological philosophy, allied to Neoplatonism and, in spite of its Christian colouring, to pantheism, and in which he found temporary peace.

This same friend and Doctor Metz, who was her physician as well as his own, led him to studies and investigations of a mystical, alchemistical, and medical nature. The works of Georg von Welling, Paracelsus, Basilius Valentinus, van Helmont, and the *Aurea Catena Homeri* were taken up on quiet winter evenings and read with great delight, partly by himself, and partly in company with Fräulein von Klettenberg and his mother. He was especially attracted by the *Aurea Catena Homeri*, in which the cycle of nature was described in a beautiful half-mystic, half-scientific way, and by the works of the daring, profound, fantastic Paracelsus, from which he copied copious notes into his diary. The spirit which dominated these works was closely related to the magical, and they seemed to open up a mysterious, supernatural world to the young adept, before whose eyes the night-studying * magus was already drawing his magic circles. Neither did he neglect to try (likewise following the example of Fräulein von Klettenberg), by way of chemical experiment, to discover the mysterious interrelation of things. He fitted up a small laboratory, experimented at his wind furnace with alembics and retorts, partly to produce so-called neutral salts, partly to extract a virgin earth from liquor silicum and observe its transition into pregnancy. To be sure, he did not succeed, but these studies and experiments under the guidance of the chemical compendium of Boerhave brought him closer to methodical chemistry and gave him at the same time true colours and happy motives for his germinating *Faust*.

Side by side with his philosophical, alchemistical, and

* Considering the very large use made by Bielschowsky of Goethe's own words in writing this biography the word *nachforschend* (investigating) of his text must be a misprint for *Nachtforschend*, and my translation endeavours to reproduce the meaning of the latter word. *Cf.* Goethe's letter to Friederike Oeser (*Br.*, i., 190), in which the words, "*ein Nachtforschender Magus*" occur.—C.

medical investigations went historical, philological, esthetic, and juristic studies, in which we can plainly see Goethe's bent toward nature and empiricism. Wherever in his reading he finds anything about the superiority of that which is original and drawn from experience over musty theory and that which is merely learned, it evokes a lively echo in his breast.

In Frankfort we find but little literary activity. He gives the finishing touch to the Leipsic compositions, and works at a story and a farce of which we know nothing definite. A period in which he ploughed and sowed and his heart lay fallow was not calculated to produce a harvest.

At the approach of the following spring, Goethe found his health, and especially his spirits, so far renewed that he felt able to complete his study of the law at another university. At least, he desired to get away from Frankfort again as soon as possible. The heavy air at home weighed upon him, and his relations with his father were in the highest degree unrefreshing. When his father, impatient at the long, unwelcome interruption of his son's career, often offended him most painfully by suggesting that only a little will-power was needful to start things going again, Goethe insulted him in turn by boyish, thoughtless contradiction and by precocious criticism, which put his father's taste and insight in an evil light. There were painful collisions, that caused wounds which the mother was able to heal only in a limited measure.

The elder Goethe had selected Strasburg as the second university for his son. After securing his degree, Goethe was to travel through France and live in Paris for some time. He was quite in favour of these plans, which promised him so much pleasure, and at the the end of March, 1770, with as light a heart as before in the autumn of 1765, he left his native city.

# VIII

## STRASBURG

Fondness for Alsatia — Return of health — *Table d'hôte* companions — Salzmann — Lerse — Jung-Stilling — Tour of Lower Alsatia and northern Lorraine — Cards and dancing — Power of fascination — Study of law — Candidate's examination — Study of medicine — Self-culture — The cathedral — *Von deutscher Baukunst.*

GOETHE chose the most glowing colours for the portrayal of his life in Alsatia. We can feel the happy charm with which his memory clung to the year and a half which he spent there. His style becomes more exalted, warmer, more fluent,—indeed it takes on at times a fanciful tinge. He calls the land the new paradise, and it affords him ever-fresh delight to bring it before us. He takes us now to the high tower of Strasburg, now to the heights of the Vosges, now to a gentle undulation in the plain. Wherever there opens up a wide prospect he spreads it out before us in its gorgeous splendour and blessed abundance. He can never speak of this dear land without applying to it some adjective of praise.[35] Even the air must always appear exceptionally fresh and clear.

According to the poet's statement he was filled at the very first moment with a joyful enthusiasm for his new home. Immediately after his arrival he had hastened to the top of the cathedral, and as the broad, rich country unfolded before his eyes in the bright sunlight he had thanked the good fortune that had bestowed upon him such a beautiful dwelling-place for some time to come.

In reality the pleasure at first was not unalloyed.

Neither the convalescent, nor the native of Frankfort, who had come from the beautiful and fruitful regions of the Main and the Rhine, could be so completely carried away by the quiet charms of the Alsatian landscape. But the joy of life, which came to him in ever-increasing measure after the first dull weeks, filled him with a glow of health and happiness which he had never before felt, and gave a golden hue to every corner of the country; and what the reality had lacked was supplied by the glamour of memory when, on looking back, Alsatia, where he had experienced his physical and intellectual regeneration, appeared to the poet a homogeneous picture bathed in a flood of light.

Early in April Wolfgang arrived in Strasburg, in a still uncertain state of health. As he entered the one-time imperial city, he had a presentiment that it would here be decided whether or not he should pass the remainder of the most important years of his development as an invalid, and whether or not his lofty youthful dreams of future happiness and future greatness should vanish like soap-bubbles in the air. Harassed by such doubts, he had scarcely descended at the Wirtshaus zum Geist when he opened a little memorandum-book which Councillor Moritz had given him for the journey, and found the Bible verse: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left," and he was wonderfully moved. This comforting exhortation of the sacred oracle may have helped to preserve the tender, trustful, religious frame of mind which had come upon him under the influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg and his illness.

"I am still just as I used to be," he writes in the first days in Strasburg to his Leipsic friend Limprecht, "except that I am better reconciled with the Lord our God and with his dear son, Jesus Christ." "Whoever cannot, like Eliezer," he preaches a few months later to a friend in Worms, "with perfect faith in the constant providence of God, trust the fate of a whole future world to the watering

of his camels,* is indeed in a sorry plight; there is no help for him. For what counsel could there be for him, who will not be counselled of God? . . . Reflections are a trivial commodity, but in prayer there is very great profit; a single welling up in the heart in the name of him whom we call a Lord, until we can address him as our Lord, and we are overwhelmed with countless blessings. . . . The heavenly physician has again renewed the flame of life within me."

Strasburg, where there was little at that time beside the garrison and the officials to remind one that it belonged to France, made upon Goethe at his arrival a humble impression. "It is not a hair's breadth better or worse than everything else I know in the world, that is to say, very ordinary." This is his opinion after the first fortnight. But the more his dull eyes brightened, the higher the city rose in his estimation.

No small share in this revolution must be attributed to his table companions. He dined at the *table d'hôte* kept by some maiden ladies by the name of Lauth in the Knoblochsgasse, and found there a very pleasant circle. There were at first about ten, later twenty, good fellows in the company, almost all pursuing some higher calling, most of them students of medicine. The leader was Johann Daniel Salzmann, clerk of the Probate Court, a bachelor of forty-eight years, who administered his office with the greatest care for the welfare of widows and orphans. From his reading, thought, and experience he had gathered a rich fund of worldly wisdom, and as to this he added gentleness, dignity, and manliness, and was of mature age, the leadership of the Round Table had for years devolved upon him. His lively interest in literature held his young companions together, not only at the *table d'hôte*, but also in a society of belles-lettres,[36] in which he likewise wielded the sceptre. Of all the company it was he to whom Goethe became most attached, and he in turn grew very fond of the youth of such refinement and such ambition. Nearest to Salzmann in



* *Cf.* Gen xxiv.

age was a knight of the order of Saint Louis, as Goethe calls a pensioned French captain without saying anything further about his name, a most eccentric man, with the fixed idea that all virtue comes from good memory and all vice from forgetfulness, and that he, alas! was afflicted with this source of all evil. Another member of the company was the theological student, Franz Lerse, of Buchsweiler in Alsatia, Goethe's favourite friend, immortalised in *Götz*. His neat, clean outward appearance corresponded to his inner life. He was an honest, clear-headed, determined youth, with a pure and noble soul, which won for him the confidence of all, and fitted him to act as peacemaker whenever a dispute arose. His love of art and poetry, and his dry humour, rounded out a pleasing personality. The medical student, Meyer von Lindau, was of a wholly different nature, uncommonly handsome, gifted, witty, but of an irrepressible levity. Of the remaining members of the company two other Alsatians were closely associated with Goethe: the theological student, Weyland, and the law student Engelbach, the latter only for the first few months.

The society received a valuable addition at the beginning of the second semester in the person of Heinrich Jung, called Stilling. He was a man of great tenderness and a deeply religious nature, who only now, at the age of thirty, after strange vicissitudes, had reached the point when he could devote himself to the study of medicine. His unalterable faith in God rested upon the manifold ups and downs in his life, in which he believed he could recognise everywhere God's providence. Furthermore, he was thoroughly educated and highly appreciative of all that is good and beautiful. He had come with an elderly surgeon by the name of Troost, who wished to inform himself of the recent progress in his art, and had appeared at the Lauths' *table d'hôte*. The description which he gave of his arrival is such a faithful picture of himself, Goethe, and the entire company, that we may insert it here, with a few omissions, in the place of an illustration: "About twenty persons dined at the table, and they [Stilling and Troost]

saw them come in one after another. They noticed especially one young man with large bright eyes, splendid brow, and beautiful figure, who entered in high spirits. Troost said to Stilling: 'That must be an extraordinary man.' Stilling assented, but thought that they should both be greatly annoyed by him, for he considered him a wild fellow. This he concluded from the student's free bearing; but Stilling was greatly mistaken. Meanwhile they noticed that this distinguished person was addressed as Herr Goethe. . . . Herr Troost whispered to Stilling: 'The best thing we can do is to keep silent for a fortnight.' Stilling recognised the wisdom of the remark, and so they kept silent, and nobody paid any especial attention to them, except that Goethe occasionally rolled his eyes toward them; he sat opposite Stilling and without seeking the honour ruled the table. . . . Herr Troost was handsomely and fashionably dressed; Stilling tolerably so. He wore a dark brown suit and Manchester trousers; but he still possessed a round wig, which he wished to alternate with his bag wigs until it should be worn out. Once he came to the table with it on. Nobody took offence at it but Herr Waldberg von Wien (probably Meyer). This man looked at him, and, as he had already heard that Stilling was very enthusiastic over religion, began by asking him, whether Adam might perchance have worn a round wig in Paradise. All laughed heartily except Salzmann, Goethe, and Troost; they did not laugh. Stilling tingled with anger and answered: 'You ought to be ashamed of this mockery! Such a commonplace idea is not worthy of being laughed at.' Goethe interrupted and said: 'First try a man, whether he be worthy of mockery! It is diabolical to make sport of a righteous man who has never offended any one!' From that time on Herr Goethe took an interest in Stilling, sought him out, became his intimate friend, and endeavoured on all occasions to show his love for him."

Jung had not yet arrived in Strasburg when Goethe, on St. John's day, 1770, made a journey to Lower Alsatia and

northern Lorraine with Weyland, who had a numerous acquaintance and many relatives in that country. Engelbach was their companion as far as Saarbrücken. The friends first rode to Zabern, where they admired the bishop's palace and the daring mountain road, Die Zaberner Steige, then to Buchsweiler, where Weyland's parents gave them a warm welcome; from there over the Bastberg, where the petrified shells engrossed Goethe's attention, to Lützelstein, and then through the valley of the Saar down to Saarbrücken. Here Goethe came into a rich industrial territory, which, thanks to his relations with the Saarbrücken president, von Günderode, he was enabled to examine thoroughly. The operation of coal mines, glass-works, iron-works, alum-works, and other industrial establishments charmed his great eyes, peering about on every side, and inspired him for the first time with the love of technical and economic enterprises, which he evinced in so many ways in his later official career in Weimar. After the friends had taken leave of Engelbach in Saarbrücken, where he had received a councillorship, they returned via Zweibrücken to Alsatia, entering the country at the rocky fortress of Bitsch. On their further journey through the Bärenthal, where thousands of trees were rotting in the primeval forests, Goethe found more iron-works and coal mines, while in the baths of Niederbronn he plunged into the spirit of antiquity, and the ruined fragments of reliefs, capitals, and columns, which looked out strangely upon him from the midst of peasant cottages, furnished him not long after with a finely toned background for his *Wandrer*. Goethe asserts that he proceeded via Reichshofen and Hagenau and made a visit at the parsonage in Sesenheim, but we know that he did not enter this remarkable house till some months later.

Returning from the beautiful journey refreshed in body and spirit, he gave himself over more and more to a more cheerful, varied social life. To be sure, he soon gave up association with the pious people to whom he had brought an introduction from Fräulein von Klettenberg, for they,

lacking the spirituality of his friend, soon became an intolerable bore to him with their monotonous "edifying discourse." On the other hand, Salzmann had introduced him into a number of families, where he passed many hours. Intercourse with these families created within him a feeling of the need of cultivating his social talents, now so long neglected, and while he had defied Frau Böhme's counsel that he should learn to play cards, he now willingly followed the same advice from his fatherly friend. He also overcame his old dislike of dancing, and after he had gone to the balls in the suburbs and danced with the prettily dressed maids, to try if he were able to keep time, he went to a French dancing-master for instruction.

These lessons were the means of bringing Goethe into a little love episode [37] which was destined to open his eyes to his dangerous power of fascination. The dancing master had two pretty young daughters, who helped their father in his instruction. The new pupil exerted a magnetic influence over the hearts of both, but more powerfully over that of the older, Lucinde; but Emilie, too, the younger, who had already given away her heart and hand, began after some time to be afraid of the handsome student. She begged him not to come to her house, a request with which he could the more readily comply, she added, as he had already completed the course in dancing with great success. "And in order that it may really be the last time that we speak with each other, take," she said, "what I should otherwise have refused you," and kissed him most lovingly. At this moment the side door flew open, Lucinde burst in and overwhelmed her sister with passionate reproaches, saying that this was not the first heart she had robbed her of, and that her sister's triumphs had cost her thousands of tears. "Now you have taken him away from me. . . . I know that I have lost him, but you shall not have him either." With these words she caught Goethe by the head, to his confusion and astonishment, and kissed him repeatedly on the mouth. "Fear my curse; misfortune upon misfortune for ever and ever upon the first girl who after

me kisses these lips!" She thought that this curse would fall upon her sister. Goethe withdrew from her uncanny caresses and left the house, never to return.

If we find Goethe toward the end of the first semester already associating with a large number of friends scattered far and wide; find him now in Strasburg and now away on journeys; and if, as we shall soon have occasion to do, we find him, in addition to these social distractions, engaged in manifold ways in the study of art and science, we shall ask ourselves with some concern, as his father must have done, "What is the state of his law studies? Is his Leipsic habit repeating itself here; is his insatiable thirst for knowledge and society drawing the young man away from his first duties, and undermining his foundation for the future?"

Fate, which was so often friendly to him, had, to his good fortune, brought him to Strasburg. Although the city was still entirely German, yet at the university French ways had gained a certain footing. In the study of law the practical tendency of the French was followed, and the student was not required to know anything about the historical and philosophical development of the law, but solely and simply to know the law in force. This knowledge was acquired without any special effort by the aid of so-called tutors, or, as we call them nowadays, "coaches." Goethe took advantage of such assistance, and as he had made good use of his last days in Frankfort, and remembered more than he thought from his boyhood study and from the years at Leipsic, he succeeded, in spite of all serious and trifling objections, in passing his candidate's examination with great ease at the end of the summer semester. From now on he was relieved of the duty of attending lectures; there remained for him only the writing of a dissertation in order to obtain the doctor's degree and open up for himself the career of a jurist. The dissertation, for the preparation of which he allotted himself the space of a year, claimed very little of his attention. Consequently, from October, 1770, on, much of his time was free.

A less sterling nature than his would have degener-

ated with his abundant leisure, the temptations of a liberal allowance of money, an extensive and interesting acquaintance, youthful spirits, and the favour which he found with women. For him these were but the means of completing the magnificent harmony of his mind. A large part of his spare time he spent in broadening his knowledge of medicine. His interest in this science had been aroused by his table companions at Privy Councillor Ludwig's in Leipsic. In Frankfort he had continued the study in his sick-room, and in Strasburg he scarcely needed the daily intercourse with medical students to incite him to inform himself on the subject. With as much thoroughness as if medicine were to be his future calling, he pursued this study from the beginning of the second semester. He worked in the dissecting-room, attended the clinical lectures on internal medicine and obstetrics, and did not neglect the auxiliary sciences, such as chemistry,* for which he had nourished a secret preference. In this way he began to make himself at home in a field in which he was later to arrive at very important results.

One secondary effect of his study of medicine was not unwelcome to him. It cured him of all horror of the ugliness or loathsomeness of a diseased or dead body. He also sought to rid himself of other physical and moral weaknesses. Thus he overcame the feeling of dizziness by climbing to the highest point on the cathedral, where he sat in the so-called neck just below the lantern for about a quarter of an hour and then stepped out upon a ledge, scarcely a square yard in size, which made him feel as if he were hovering in the air. He repeated this experiment until he could walk about on the dizziest places with perfect security. In a similar manner he rid himself of his sensitiveness to loud noises. In the evening at the beating of the tattoo he would walk along by the drummers, even though the rolling of the drums was almost enough to

* This statement is based on Goethe's letter to Fräulein von Klettenberg (*Br.*, i., 247), where *Chymie* is the word used, but it means in this case "alchemy," not "chemistry."—C.

rupture the very heart in his breast. Also his secret fear of graveyards, churches, and other lonely places at night he so completely eradicated by repeated visits that later in life he was hardly able, with all the artifices of his imagination, to recall again the shudderings of his youth.

It would not have been worth while to mention all these little traits of the poet, if it were not that they illustrate his strict self-culture and the extraordinary energy he applied to overcome his weaknesses. Who, of the many thousands of brave men who suffer from dizziness, would imitate his break-neck attempts to discipline himself on the spire of the cathedral? To him, indeed, it seemed worth while to climb to the finial of the highest pinnacle of the tower, and not to brook any hindrances whatever. For the glorious work of Ervinus a Steinbach was to him from the very first moment an ever-increasing source of deepest pleasure. Here he became acquainted with a work of art of such greatness, sublimity, and beauty as he had never before seen. It filled his soul as with the joys of heaven, and he returned to it evening and morning to view it on all sides, from all distances, and in every light. "How often the evening twilight with its pleasant stillness," he exclaims a few months after his departure from Strasburg in an essay on German architecture, "has refreshed my eyes, wearied with close looking, as it melted the countless parts into great masses, and these stood before my soul in their simplicity and greatness! What a fresh impression the cathedral made upon me in the morning haze, how joyfully I stretched out my arms toward it, and beheld the great harmonious mass full of life down to the minutest parts!" The mighty work seemed to him not a product of human hands but a creation of nature, everything perfect in form, even to the smallest details, everything subordinated to the whole. In anger he cast aside the old erroneous esthetic doctrines of the want of taste in Gothic art. He had been taught to interpret Gothic as meaning anything irregular, unnatural, or full of contradiction, but now it seemed to him to mean the highest possible degree of regularity, naturalness, and har-

mony. And what had been designated as patchwork and over-adornment seemed to him to be the most natural, most suggestive, most beautiful ornamentation, the invention of a divinely inspired genius, to relieve the weight of the mass and give to the whole structure the impression of permanent solidity and pleasing gracefulness. Mere looking and admiring did not satisfy him long. He began to investigate, to measure, to draw. He endeavoured to produce in his drawing all that was lacking and all that was completed, studying especially the tower. To his fine eye it seemed probable that for the tower a five-pointed crown had been the original plan, a supposition which, to his joyful satisfaction, was confirmed by the original drawing.

The youth who, on French soil, was glowing with enthusiasm for his fatherland, thought it permissible to consider Gothic as the genuine German style; and in his enthusiasm he renamed the Gothic German, and in the reverberating echo of his studies of the Strasburg cathedral, *Von deutscher Baukunst D. M.* Ervini a Steinbach*, he set forth to the world with a tongue of fire the glory of this style.

* D. M. = divis manibus, a formula common in ancient Roman inscriptions.—C.

# IX

## THE BEGINNING OF THE LITERARY REVOLUTION

Origin of the Storm-and-Stress movement—Sovereignty of genius—Conformity to nature—Folk-poetry—Herder the spirit of the revolution—Goethe the leader—Herder's influence—His conception of poetry—His views on Shakespeare and folk-poetry—Shakespeare's influence on Goethe—Homer's influence—Ossian's—Goethe's influence on his companions—French literature condemned—Lenz—Moderating influences.

GOETHE'S faith in the prevailing doctrine of esthetics received no less a shock from the contemplation of Ervinus's beautiful monument towering up into the heavens than it had previously experienced from the reading of Lessing's *Laokoon*. Indeed the effect of the cathedral was as much profounder than that of the book had been, as must always be the case with a work of art compared with one of criticism. At the same time it confirmed in him the conception, already dimly foreshadowed in his consciousness, of the beautiful and of the power of genius. It opened wide the portals of his soul to a new revelation of the world, of life, and of art—a revelation that swept over him in Strasburg and found in him its most inspired disciple and most glorious fulfilment.

For this new revelation, the effect of which Goethe rightly characterises as the German literary revolution, the way had long been preparing.

The Thirty Years' War had buried the culture and material prosperity of Germany beneath its ruins, and through its endless division into tiny states the nation had degenerated into narrowness and insignificance. "Miser-

able" and "petty": these two words characterise German conditions in the century from 1648 to 1740. The recuperative power inherent in the German people was, however, too great to permit them to continue in this pitiful state. As the upward struggle was slow in the material world, so also in the intellectual.

From 1740 on we see the German mind now here, now there, now under this form, now under that, rebelling against the indolence, perversity, and narrow-mindedness into which it had sunk. In the south, from the theory of the Swiss critics, in the north, from the deeds of the Prussian king, there sprang a refreshing breeze which waked the imagination, mother of everything significant.

The appearance of Frederick the Second furthermore aroused the Germans to a consciousness of the miserable life they had been leading. His personality as well as his state, that towered boldly amid the crazy, rotten scaffolds of the other German governments like some formidable, well-planned fortress, stirred the ambition of all youthful souls, whether friends or enemies.

It was certainly no mere chance that three of the reformers of German intellectual life, whose influence was especially due to the greatness of their thoughts (Winckelmann, Hamann, Herder), came from Prussia, and that two others (Klopstock and Lessing) were in large measure under Prussian influence.

After Klopstock had restored the emotional life of Germany, Lessing raised his gleaming sword, and with a mighty blow freed the nation from the bondage of erroneous theories of art, false slavery to rules, dead literalism, and cold orthodoxy. And he followed his scathing criticism by literary creations in which he vied with Klopstock in weaning his countrymen from platitude and mediocrity.

But the ploughshare had to sink deeper into the German intellectual soil before new seed could spring up with vigour. Such an upheaval was also favoured by the longing of the age. The aggressive young men especially were opposed to improving what was already in existence. Not reformation,

but revolution, was their unuttered watchword. And thus the way was preparing for an epoch in which greatness failed to satisfy, and the monstrous and the incomprehensible were demanded, when the clear and distinct must give way to the chiaroscuro, which makes us divine and imagine heavenly truths and beauties which reason and eyesight cannot discern. For it was felt instinctively that the visible and the tangible, that which can be demonstrated and taught, cannot be final; there must be something beyond our vision, dimly apprehensible to the prophetic soul. Therefore people turned their backs upon rationalistic doctrines and enlightenment as upon credulous submission to dogma, system, or text-book. Esthetic and religious mysticism, on the other hand, was embraced with ardour. And the tendency in this direction was the more natural because Germany was so barren and prosaic that it was a pleasure to be intoxicated with exalted mysticism and fanciful dreams. Through this philosophy the people came into touch with secret forces that permeate the universe, and the more insignificant the individual was in an absolute government, and the more he felt himself a mere cipher, a puppet, taxed in blood and money, the more he was delighted to be a part of the infinite, the world-spirit, and to share in a sovereignty which scoffed at the contemptible duodecimo sovereignties of this world.

The divine element in the individual was his genius. This genius could claim absolute independence of all human laws in life, art, and science. What man had fixed upon and established was tyrannical, arbitrary, unjust. Accordingly salvation could not lie in obedience to laws and rules, but solely in obedience to genius. Whoever cared to advance victoriously must follow its leading, that is to say, must not be a slave to rules, nor an imitator,—he must be original.

Beside the voice of one's own genius the pure revelation of the divine spirit was found only in nature. Hence "Conformity to Nature,"—the watch-cry, now serious, now frivolous, of the more highly organised, ambitious youth.

Accordingly they found the highest and greatest achievements of man in that poetry in which individuals or nations had not followed hard-and-fast rules, but solely the inspiration of genius; among the Greeks it was Homer; among the Scots, the Celtic bard Ossian; among the English, Shakespeare; it was, furthermore, found in the Bible and in folk-song. In this way the young generation sought to gain at least an inner freedom, and obtain the rights of every individual to natural development and freedom of movement, at least in the realm of the spirit. Outwardly the state and society put shackles upon their hands and feet, put wigs upon their heads, daubed their faces with paint or dusted them with powder, and checked the free movement of their bodies by ornamental cuffs and frills. A young generation with such strong, passionate feelings needed sympathetic souls to whom they could unburden their hearts; hence there developed in Germany such a cult of friendship as was never known. A young generation with the consciousness of such power and sovereignty had need of action. But as either nothing was being done in the sleepy, monotonous burgher life of the fatherland, or everything that was done descended upon the masses of the governed like rain and snow; and as there was no effective means of bringing about any change of conditions, all their craving for activity sought an outlet in poetry, and here action, passionate, stormy action, was everywhere demanded. Finally, it was evident that the existing language was no longer an adequate channel for the new and overwhelming flood of feeling. Not the well-ordered flow of speech, only an impassioned stammering, an ecstatic babbling, was capable of uttering the inner Storm and Stress.

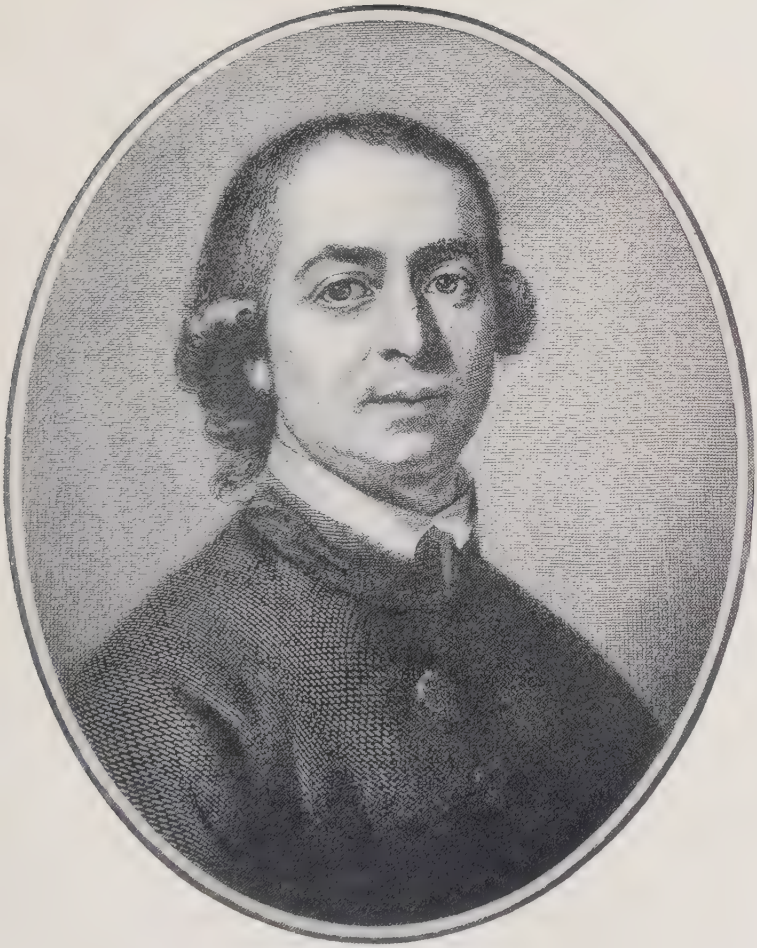
This is approximately the intellectual condition, these are in the main the views, the aims, and manifestations which came to the front in Germany, with the force of a genuine revolution, in the seventh and eighth decades of the eighteenth century, and from which, in spite of all excesses, an inestimable blessing accrued to the intellectual life, and

especially the poetry of Germany. The most important promoters of this movement were Winckelmann, Hamann, and Herder. These men were also the focus for the rays, which, coming from Greece, England, and France, enkindled a new fire in the souls of German youth. Of these men, Herder had absorbed whatever of inspiration the other two and their forerunners had originated. In him were united Klopstock's exalted flight, Lessing's great constructive criticism, Winckelmann's conscious subjectivity and love of nature, Hamann's distaste for rules and systems, and his preference for the original, the dark and the deep, as revealed by contemplation and prophetic intuition. All the seeds of the revolution had been sowed in his breast, and here they had sprung up into a new and magnificent conception of intellectual life. Thus in 1770, at the age of twenty-six, he could be considered the real head of the German revolutionary movement.

But Herder was not a general who could lead on to victory. He was without the personal magnetism which binds an army, body and soul, to their leader; the dithyrambic flights of his eloquence lacked winning warmth, and, worst of all, he had not the poetic power to transform the new gospel into mighty accomplishment.

Only one man possessed these qualifications at that time, and this was Wolfgang Goethe. He was also the only man with the power to prevent the precious ore of the movement from being buried beneath its dross, and to cleanse the raging stream of the slime which it carried along in its course, and spread it out over the fields to enrich them. What a wonderful decree of Providence, that at the most opportune moment the gifted leader of the revolution came to this unique man, communicated his ideas to him, and that thus the younger but greater genius, more certain of victory, received into his hands the staff of the field marshal!

Herder arrived in Strasburg in the early days of September, 1770, as travelling companion of the Prince of Holstein-Eutin. Although his service in this position had



HERDER
(From the Painting by von Graff)

begun no farther back than the middle of June, yet it had already become intolerable to him, because of discord with the prince's tutor, and because of its confinement. A fortnight after his arrival he resigned. But an operation on a lachrymal fistula compelled him to prolong his sojourn in Strasburg. Goethe had hardly heard of the arrival of the prominent man, when he went to pay him his respects. Being kindly received, he did not fail to repeat his visit. During the long and painful treatment our student was able to make himself very useful to the patient as a nurse, and also by helping to pass away the tedious hours with chat and cards. The friendship became more intimate, and soon Goethe was Herder's daily companion in the sick-room from morning till evening.

Herder was only five years older than Goethe. But while this disparity in age makes some difference in early life, Herder was still farther in advance of Goethe in wealth of experience, knowledge, and insight. Goethe was still growing, Herder was mature. It had been his fortune to see a great deal of the world. From Königsberg, where he had felt the determining influence of Kant and still more of Hamann, he had gone to Riga; thence he had taken a long voyage, which brought home to him the greatness of the sea, which Goethe had never seen, to France, and had spent six months in the country which was then the centre of culture. In Paris, where he lived a month and a half, he had learned as much as possible of "books and men, oratory and the theatre, dancing and painting, music and the people." He had made the acquaintance of Diderot, d'Alembert, Barthelémy, and other well-known writers. From Paris he turned to Brussels and Antwerp, where he saw the treasures of Dutch art. In Leyden he met the distinguished philologist Ruhnken, and finally his travels brought him to Hamburg, where he enjoyed several weeks of Lessing's society.

With a great fund of knowledge of the world and men he united a profound mind which had made extensive study of ancient and modern literatures and had drawn from them

their finest and most fruitful thought. As yet but little of what was stirring his soul had reached the public; beside a few trifles he had just published his *Fragmente über die neuere deutsche Literatur*, and his *Kritische Wälder*. But, as Goethe tells us, all that he accomplished in after life was already outlined in his mind. Consequently he was prepared to reveal to his young friend the full splendour of his treasure of thought.

The faithful young friend did not find it easy to quench his thirst at Herder's fountain. For nature had blended with Herder's amiable spirit a strain of bitterness, and he was much given to avenging his own trials and tribulations by ridiculing other people; and the stronger and more fortunate the one with whom he came in contact the more he indulged this habit. Thus good-hearted Wolfgang, who would gladly have anticipated the excellent man's every wish, was often made to feel the stinging lash of his sarcasm, so that even a year later the scars still smarted, and he still felt like a whipped dog when he thought of Herder's sick-room. Herder spared nothing. Now it was Goethe's name, now his false taste, now his innocent peculiarities or hobbies, now his lack of acuteness, upon which the sage poured out his sharp acidity; but nothing could induce Goethe to forsake the great man. He wrestled with him, as Jacob with the angel of the Lord, and held him fast until he received a blessing.

It was the dawn of a new world, from which Herder drew back the curtain for him, a world of which he had often been vaguely conscious, but which had as yet remained enveloped in a cloud of dreams. To see this world now in reality, and hear it convincingly portrayed as beautiful and good, gave his spirit wings, and when he felt their mighty power in flight he trembled with joy. In memory of that joyful soaring of his spirit, he could in later years characterise those days, in spite of their humiliations, as wonderful, happy days, full of glorious prophecy, and call his meeting with Herder a most important event.

Let us examine, in detail, what Goethe could and did

receive from Herder. First of all, his great, deep-penetrating method of research. Herder did not belong to those who are satisfied with recording and describing things; he was always searching for the roots from which they had sprung. In this search he discovered that, in order to learn the causes of things, one must not consider them in their isolation, but in connection with their whole environment. In intellectual things this environment included everything: land, climate, religion, mythology, constitution, habits of thought and life, etc. From this method of study all his investigations received a comprehensive, profound, epoch-making character, no matter whether his conclusions were right or wrong, whether final, or merely fragmentary and suggestive.

Herder's chief interest was in poetry. Upon what does poetry rest, and what is its source? Guided by Hamann's declaration that "poetry is the mother tongue of the human race," Herder recognises that the roots of poetry and speech are intertwined. "For what was the first language but a collection of poetic elements? An imitation of the sounds, actions, and motions of nature—the natural speech of all creatures, translated by the understanding into sounds, personified in pictures of actions, passions, and living impressions—a constant composition of fables full of passion and interest." In course of time, with departure from nature, language was no doubt transformed from poetry into prose, and now, instead of knowing of its beauty, we know only of its correctness. We seek to limit it in every direction, and we rob it of its sensuous beauty. The followers of Gottsched, by their condemnation of free constructions, new formations, and homely expressions, have produced a watery style. But daring genius discards the burdensome ceremonial demanded by grammarians and digs down into the heart of language, as into the bowels of the earth, in search of gold. If poetry and language are one in their origin, then poetry cannot, as narrow-minded people think, be the private inheritance of a few clever, educated men, it must be a universal gift (a sentence which delighted

Goethe). Poetry must stand the higher, the nearer the poet, whether a people or an individual, stands to nature. Hence the most glorious poems are those of the most ancient peoples, or of savages, and those of the sons of nature, Moses, Homer, Ossian. For civilisation is not conducive to poetry. It has deprived us of firmness of eye and hand, sureness of thought and expression, spriteliness and genuineness of feeling, and so even of the capability of appreciating the great poets and hearing the spirit of nature which sings in them.

But it is not by imitating great poets that we attain to anything better and higher; it is by learning from them the art of poetry, the art of reflecting in poetry our own nature, history, manner of thought, and language; that is to say, we must imitate ourselves,—must be original.

Such poets were, among the ancient dramatists, Sophocles and Æschylos; among the modern, Shakespeare. Therefore it is absurd to judge Shakespeare by the rules of the ancients. Each has represented his own world in the drama. Shakespeare found before him a world no longer simple, and hence his dramas could not be simple. He portrayed history, situations, great events in their actual complexity and many-sidedness, and he remained faithful to truth and nature when he traced the course of history and human fate through all their various scenes and stages. He lays hold of a hundred scenes, marshals them before him, and quickens them with a single spirit animating the whole. He speaks the languages of all ages and conditions of men, is the interpreter of nature in all her tongues. When one reads him, theatre, actor, curtain, all vanish. One sees but a world of dramatic history, as great and deep as nature. For the poet as god of the drama no clock strikes upon tower or temple, for it is his to create both measure of space and of time. This measure of time and space dwells in his soul, and thither he must transport his audience by his magic and compel them to accept his standards.

As the dramatist must learn from Shakespeare, so must the lyric poet from the songs of the common people, and

especially from the old Scotch lays of Ossian, which Herder, convinced, like almost everybody else, of their genuineness, does not hesitate to place on an equality with the folk-song. In his characterisation of the folk-song, however, he unconsciously avoids taking the clever fraud of Macpherson into consideration. The folk-song, he explains, is full of freshness, strength, objectivity; it speaks, it reasons not, it paints; there is no other connection among its parts than among the trees and bushes of the forest, hence its bold transitions and daring strokes. Language and rhythm are the exact expression of the contents and therefore an organic part of the song.

Herder spoke with no little enthusiasm of Homer and of the Bible, which he taught Goethe for the first time to appreciate as poetry. Homer he calls all nature, and Moses he places by the side of Homer, and hence, also, by the side of Ossian.

He further turns Goethe's thoughts and attention to Pindar's dithyrambs, makes him acquainted with Hamann's favourite ideas and expressions, reads Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* to him, points him to the great satirist Swift, and brings the Norse mythologic and heroic songs of the *Edda* nearer to his heart.

Through these thoughts and inspirations Herder became Goethe's guide and liberator. Whatever of creative power in poetry and language there was latent in Goethe's genius he developed into conscious and free activity. For that reason Goethe eagerly devoured everything that Herder put at his disposal. He felt the naturalness of this food, which strengthened, broadened, and exalted his whole being. Homer, Ossian, and Shakespeare became favourite books with him, as the Bible had been since his early youth. But while Ossian after a few years again retired into the background, Homer and Shakespeare remained his companions through life.

The influence of Shakespeare on Goethe in his Strasburg period cannot be overestimated. True, the British poet had already so captivated him that he placed him beside

Oeser and Wieland as his teacher, but this very grouping is evidence that the full greatness of the poet had not yet dawned upon him. It came over him first through Herder. Now whenever he read Shakespeare in the quiet of his room, as he tells us in *Wilhelm Meister*, it seemed to him as if a magician were moving a host of spirits about him in an eternal circle of change, and he was vexed if anybody brought him back from this magic world to talk of another. All the prophetic feelings which he had ever had about man and his fate he saw developed and fulfilled in Shakespeare's plays. They seemed to him the work of a heavenly genius, and, like Herder, he felt that he had before him, not poems, but the huge open book of fate. As he expresses himself in the manifesto, *Zum Shakespearestag*, written a year later, he felt his life infinitely broadened. Now for the first time he dared to leap into the free air, and now for the first time he began to feel that he had hands and feet. And when he saw how much injustice he had suffered from the tyranny of rules, and how many free souls were still crouching in their fetters, his heart would have burst within him had he not made it the business of his life to raze their prisons. He grasps more distinctly than Herder the point of view of the Shakespearian dramas, which assures their inner unity and dramatic effect, perceiving that the peculiarity of the ego, the pretended freedom of the will, clashes with the necessary progress of the whole. Our distorted taste so obscures our vision that we are almost in need of a new creation to deliver us from this darkness. The most of Shakespeare's critics are offended at his characters. But he cries out: "Nature, nature! nothing so near to nature as Shakespeare's men!"

While the freedom and sureness of Shakespeare's genius gave him back his own freedom and sureness; while he admired Shakespeare's deep insight into the confusion of the world and thus deepened his own; and while from the psychological miniature-drawing of characters, which he compares with the ingenious works of a watch, he derived the richest nourishment for his own art, nevertheless this

was not all that he owed to Shakespeare. The greatest gain, perhaps, was that Shakespeare's world, according to his confession, inspired him more than anything else to make more rapid progress in the real world, to plunge into the flood of fate that surrounds it, and then some day dip from the great sea of true nature a few cupfuls and present them to the famishing public. "To plunge into the flood of fate,"—let us remember these words for his further career in life.

Enthusiasm for Shakespeare produced in the friendly sick-room a glow which at times melted even the reserve of Herder, who more than once embraced his devoted pupil before the sacred image of the master.

Less profound and stormy, but no less lasting and beneficial, was the effect of Homer on Goethe. In order to understand him in the original he resumed his Greek studies, and in the midst of a life busied with a multiplicity of scientific studies, social intercourse, and love-making, he studied Greek faithfully, so that in a short time he was able to understand the rhapsodies of the Ionian poet almost without translation. As to what he gained from Homer while in Strasburg we have very little information. We merely know from Herder that Goethe liked to speak of the Homeric heroes, which his fancy pictured to him as so many storks, wading about, beautiful, great, and free.

The Ossianic poems, with their sublime, mournful tones and their great melancholy scenes, gave him a fervour of feeling rather than originality of thought, colour rather than form. The most important thing was that they kindled his love for the folk-song. He began to pay heed to the songs of the Alsatian people, and succeeded in gathering from the mouths of aged beldams a small anthology, which he gave to Herder for his collection. But as the poet drank at the fountain of the folk-song, his own songs, as they welled up within him, took on that wonderful harmony, that delightful breath of simplicity, freshness, and inwardness, and that plastic objectivity, which make them seem to be separated from his earlier productions and from those of his contemporaries by a hundred years. The dew of the

folk-song developed Goethe's lyric poetry over night into full flower. He never composed more fragrant songs than the *Mailied* and the *Heidenröslein*, or anything fuller of feeling than *Willkommen und Abschied*.

Herder tarried in Strasburg seven months, every day of which was full of most fruitful instruction for Goethe. The querulous man, who looked upon the city at first as a most miserable, barren, disagreeable place, became more than ever disgusted after the failure of the operation on his eye, and at Easter, 1771, he was glad indeed to leave. As he had become financially embarrassed, Goethe borrowed a sum of money for him, which was returned, long after it was promised, accompanied by some mocking doggerel. A year later, when his betrothed had written in praise of Goethe, Herder replied that he was in reality a good man, but extremely fickle and far too much like a sparrow; however, he was the only man who had visited him regularly during his confinement and whom he had been glad to see. The aristocratic indifference with which he here speaks of Goethe was for the most part feigned.

With the free and daring ideas which Goethe had received from Herder's teachings, with the enthusiasm which he had developed for Shakespeare, Homer, and Ossian, he infected the whole company at the *table d'hôte* and aroused among them such a fury of Storm and Stress that the common things of every-day life were completely submerged. Nature and freedom became the guiding principles of the young friends; they wanted to produce everything of themselves in untrammelled liberty, without artificiality and without subservience to rules.

Freundſchaft, Liebe, Brüderſchaft—
Trägt die ſich nicht von ſelber vor?*

That was the war-cry given out by Goethe, and soon after incorporated in the original text of *Faust*, and, guided by it, the young iconoclasts overthrew all the objections of tradi-

* Friendship, love, and brotherhood—
Speak they not for themselves, without the aid of art?

tion and conventionality. This war-cry also formed the central thought for the convivial celebrations, which they held, for the greater exaltation of their spirits, on the platform on the top of the unfinished tower of the cathedral, where they tossed off brimming bumpers to the honour of the setting sun.

With his most intimate friends Goethe had other special pleasures. He often drove down the Ill with Lerse, and by the light of the lantern in the Ruprechtsau read Ossian and Homer with him and occupied the same bed with him, but did not sleep any. Often on such occasions he would go into ecstasies, speak words of prophecy, and make Lerse fear he would go mad, as the latter humorously related in Weimar a generation later.

It elated the young men, too, that they could now be cordially glad of their German nationality and that they could look down upon the swaggering French with contempt. For not only had they heard from Herder that nobody could attain true greatness without developing in his own life the characteristics of his people, but also that the French literature for which they had long since conceived an aversion was in reality of no account. It had grown old and aristocratic, while Europe was thirsting for rejuvenation. French criticism, it seemed to them, lacked creative power,—was only negative, disparaging; French poetics was a prison in which the drama was languishing; the classical French drama was a parody on itself. From the boasted European celebrity, Voltaire, they were repulsed by his dishonesty, his barren wit, and his coldness. It was evident to them that he understood neither the Bible, nor Shakespeare, nor nature. In the presence of the Encyclopedists they felt as if they were walking about among the innumerable moving spindles and looms of a great factory. And, to cap the climax, the materialists with Holbach at their head! His *Système de la Nature* seemed to them so pallid, so Cimmerian, so cadaverous, that they shuddered at it as at a ghost. But when the author made the plea, that as an old man retired from active life he had

had no other ambition than to serve the truth, the young people scoffed at him, saying: "Old churches have dark windows," and "How cherries and berries taste one must ask children and sparrows." For the cold barrenness and the senile torpor which they thought they discovered in French literature they could find no compensation in such men as Diderot and Rousseau, of whom the latter especially had appealed strongly to them with his call "back to nature." Indeed, the fate of Rousseau, who was at that time living in poverty and obscurity in Paris, served the rather to anger them anew at the French. Besides, there was the rottenness in the public life of France, which was discussed in Strasburg with great bitterness, and which made it easy to foresee the collapse of the state.

Accordingly the youthful companions took delight in casting overboard everything French. And on the very frontier of France they felt themselves thoroughly rid of everything that savoured of that nation. They even objected to the French spoken by their neighbours, and would not permit any other language than German to be used at the table.

This revolutionary, free, and patriotic spirit of the company was considerably strengthened at Easter, 1771, by the arrival of the Livonian poet, Jacob Lenz. He was twenty years of age, was a student of theology, and was acting as tutor to the two young Courland Barons von Kleist, who were going to serve in the French army. He was a neat, trim little body, somewhat bashful, gentle, of good parts and fair poetic talent, and, with his striving for freedom and originality, fitted into the Storm-and-Stress circle very well. Received with open arms, he with Jung, Goethe, and Lerse formed a circle in which, as Jung-Stilling remarks, everybody felt at home who could appreciate the beautiful and the good. But it was the misfortune of the youth gifted with so many superior qualities, that his mind, insufficiently developed by serious study, was not capable of the expansion which he desired to give it. He overworked it, and the thin fabric gave way.

That he formed too high an opinion of himself was, in no

small degree, the fault of the rapturous mutual admiration in vogue in the circle, the dangers of which Goethe thought he had barely escaped by the scathing criticisms of Herder. But the less Lenz attained by actual achievement to the importance for which he longed, the more he sought to increase the weight of his personality by all sorts of machinations. Goethe also suffered from this spirit of intrigue, for Lenz bestowed upon him a wonderful combination of love and admiration, envy and hatred. It was another pernicious peculiarity of his that he loved to toy with the fictions of his fancy, treating them now as real, now as empty, until he lost control over them and consequently fluctuated between the most irreconcilable moods and aspirations, and plunged from one self-deception into another. But his morbidness, whimsicality, and eccentricity were not completely revealed until later. In the few remaining months that he was associated with Goethe in Strasburg his better nature was always dominant and made him for Goethe and the others a beloved companion.

With his strong interest in the theatre, he seized with avidity Herder's thoughts on Shakespeare and the modern drama. But, for his revolutionary desire to bring forth something entirely new, Herder's standpoint did not suffice. He shared Herder's enthusiasm for Shakespeare, but drew from the English poet quite other lessons. While Herder, following Shakespeare, demanded a great historical event as the basis of a drama, Lenz admitted actions or events as motives only in comedy; tragedy should rest entirely upon great or remarkable characters. And in support of this axiom he referred not only to Shakespeare but also to the oldest German dramatists, for example, Hans Sachs. Obscure and strange as were these opinions, expressed in his *Anmerkungen über das Theater*, still, because they turned all previous influential criticism topsy-turvy, they were warmly received by the Strasburg circle, and hence Goethe refers those who care to know what discussions were carried on in his day in the Strasburg society both to Herder's essay on Shakespeare and to Lenz's article.

Beside Lenz, still another member of Salzmann's society is worthy of mention, Heinrich Leopold Wagner, a student of law, who afterwards wrote *Die Kindermörderin*. Even if he did nothing worthy of mention during Goethe's stay in Strasburg, yet, as he was counted soon afterward one of the leading types of the Storm-and-Stress period and came into close touch with Goethe, he must be included for the sake of completing the picture.

The absolute return to nature, or to what was considered nature, and the revolt from laws and canons, was for Goethe and his friends fraught with the great danger that they might become rude, lacking in form, monstrous, confused, and thus ruin their poetry and their lives. But while Goethe's thorough education and the happy instinct of his genius usually brought him back at critical moments to the right way, many experiences and impressions especially preserved his mind from falling into unwholesome extravagances. Thus his complete loss of self in the sombre charm of Gothic architecture was counterbalanced by the contemplation of the sunny art of Raphael, which a happy chance brought to his attention in the tapestries used to decorate the building where Marie Antoinette, the future queen of France, was to be received on her arrival in Strasburg. While, in Dresden, he had passed by Raphael with indifference, here he would gladly have studied, revered, even worshipped him every day and every hour. The influence of the Roman ruins which he had seen in Niederbronn was in the same direction, as was also the excellent collection of plaster casts of ancient sculpture which he saw in Mannheim on the return journey to Frankfort. The melancholy mist in the atmosphere of Ossian was effectually overcome by the bright sun of Homer. And, finally, his whole character was moderated and purified by his true love of a lovely, noble girl, whose brightness turned the night into day—Friederike.

# X

## FRIEDERIKE

Goethe's first visit in Sesenheim—The Brion family and the *Vicar of Wakefield*—Goethe's letter to Friederike—His visit at Christmas—Friederike in Strasburg—Goethe's Easter visit—Confession of love—*Willkommen und Abschied*—*Mailied*—Friederike's illness—Goethe's letters to Salzmann—He deserts Friederike—His reason—*Die neue Melusine*.

GOETHE introduces, with great solemnity, the account, in his autobiography, of his relation to Friederike. Three times in significant passages he suggests it in a tone of deep feeling, but not until the fourth time does he satisfy our curiosity. First, he points out from the top of the cathedral a little spot toward which he is drawn by a lovely charm, and lets it fade away again from our sight; then he transports us into the darkness of a mountain forest, and there in the stillness of the night the sound of hunting horns recalls to him the image of a fair creature, but scarcely has the apparition flashed before our eyes when it vanishes like a meteor; then he rides through the forest of Hagenau along bridle-paths, with which love had made him familiar, toward his dear Sesenheim—we learn now at least the name of the place—and at last we think he will lead us to his loved one, but again he digresses and tells us of Herder and *The Vicar of Wakefield*. And only when he has done with this topic does he think the moment has arrived, not, indeed, to remove the veil altogether from the picture so dear, so sacred to him, but to lift it little by little, until we are inspired with enough reverence to behold it in all its innocent beauty.

Friederike, awaited with as much impatience by her relatives as by us, enters the room, like the first star in the evening sky. Slender and light, as if she had no weight to bear, she came tripping in, and it seemed almost as if her neck were too delicate to support the heavy blond braids of her dainty head. Her merry blue eyes looked frankly about, and her neat little turned-up nose breathed the air as freely as if there could be no care in the world; her straw hat was hanging on her arm, so that the guest had the pleasure of seeing her for the first time in all her beauty and loveliness.

In the early part of October, 1770, Goethe had been introduced to the family of Pastor Brion by his friend Weyland, who was related to them by marriage. The family of the pastor, which seemed to the poet to mirror the Primrose household, numbered at that time seven: the kindly, noble father, fifty-three years of age, the well-bred, dignified mother, in her forty-sixth year, four daughters, and one son. Of the four daughters, the oldest was no longer at home, being already married. Of the other three, active, roguish Marie Salomea, whom Goethe calls Olivia, out of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, was twenty-one, Friederike about nineteen, and the third, Sophie, about fourteen. She is not mentioned by Goethe, as she does not fit into the parallel between the Brion family and the Primroses. But we are made acquainted with the son, Christian, seven years of age, who, in honour of his English prototype, is called Moses. Goethe had just entered upon his twenty-second year a few weeks before. According to his account he began his visit by a merry little episode in which he indulged his fondness for masquerading by appearing in shabby clothes as a poor student of theology. On the following morning, however, as Friederike had caught his fancy, and he wished to engage hers in turn, he was vexed at the ugly disguise, and rode away to Drusenheim, put on the landlord's son George's best clothes and appeared again in Sesenheim with a christening cake in his hand, which occasioned all sorts of surprises and jokes. Goethe tells

us further that on the first evening he took a moonlight stroll with Friederike; that he walked along beside her, supremely happy and listening to her stories, which, however, had nothing sentimental about them. "The brightness of her talk turned the night into day." The following day he sits absorbed in sweet dreams in Friederike's favourite resort on a little wooded hill, marked by a tablet, Friederikens Ruhe. In this quiet place Friederike finds him. A conversation arises which is carried on by Goethe with great vivacity. "Whereas she had borne the burden of the conversation on the moonlight walk the evening before, I now in my turn liberally repaid the debt." They return to the parsonage together. After dinner the young people betake themselves into "a roomy arbour," perhaps the oft-mentioned jasmine arbour opposite the parsonage. There Goethe tells, according to his own statement, the tale, *Die neue Melusine*, which he later inserted in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. He passes a few charming days in the amiable family, and when, on the fourteenth of October he arrives in Strasburg there is a barb in his heart. The very next day he writes a letter [38] to Friederike (the only one that has survived from the correspondence of the lovers), in which we plainly see the afterglow of the happiness of the days they had spent together.

"Dear new Friend:

"I do not hesitate so to call you, for even if I know but a very little of the language of the eyes, my eye at the first glance read in yours the hope of this friendship, and for our hearts I could swear. Could it be that, you, tender and good, as I know you, feel not the least inclination for me, who hold you so dear?—Dear, dear friend, whether or not I have anything to say to you, there is indeed no question; but whether I know just why I am going to write to you at this moment and what I should like to say, that is another matter. So much do I know from a certain inward unrest, that I should much like to be with you; and in such a case a little scrap of paper is as true a consolation

as winged a horse to me, here in the midst of noisy Strasburg, as ever it can be to you in your peacefulness, when you keenly feel the separation from your friends.—The circumstances of our homeward journey you can pretty well imagine, if you were able to see in my looks how sad I felt at parting from you, and if you observed Weyland's eagerness to get home, gladly as he would have stayed with you under other circumstances. His thoughts went forward, mine backward, and so, naturally, the conversation could be neither extensive nor interesting. . . . Finally we arrived, and the first thought which occurred to us, and which had been our consolation on the way, was a plan to see you again soon. There is something so dear in the hope of meeting again. And we with our pampered hearts, when anything makes us the least bit sad, are always ready with the remedy, and say: 'Dear heart, be quiet; you will not long be separated from those you love; be quiet, dear heart.' And then we make for it a shadow picture that it may meanwhile have something at least, and then it is obedient and quiet like a little child whose mother gives it a doll instead of the apple which it ought not to eat.—Enough, we are here, and you see that you were wrong! You would not believe that the noise of the city would grate on my ears after your sweet country joys. Certainly, Mam'sell, Strasburg never seemed to me so empty as now. I hope it may be better when time shall have worn away a little of the memory of our delightful, unrestrained enjoyment, when I shall no longer feel so vividly how good, how amiable, my friend is. But can it be that I could or would forget it? No, I will rather keep the little heartache and write to you often. And now many, many thanks; many, many sincere remembrances to your dear parents; to your dear sister many hundreds of —, which I would gladly repay to you."

Whether or not Goethe, as he planned, returned soon to Sesenheim we do not know. At all events he was there in the winter—perhaps at Christmas—after he had announced his visit with the beautiful verses [39]:

Ich komme bald, ihr goldnen Kinder,
Vergebens ſperret uns der Winter
In unſre warmen Stuben ein.
Wir wollen uns zum Feuer ſetzen
Und tauſendfältig uns ergötzen,
Uns lieben wie die Engelein.
Wir wollen kleine Kränzchen winden,
Wir wollen kleine Sträußchen binden
Und wie die kleinen Kinder ſein.*

They were brought still closer together by a protracted visit—perhaps at the beginning of Lent—which Frau Brion and her daughters made in Strasburg. But their intercourse in the city was not as intimate and unconventional as in the country, and for that reason Goethe hailed with delight the Easter vacation, which was to bring him to his loved one again in her home. On Easter Eve he mounts his horse and is off on a wild ride to Sesenheim:

Es ſchlug mein Herz—geſchwind zu Pferde
Und fort, wild wie ein Held zur Schlacht!
Der Abend wiegte ſchon die Erde,
Und an den Bergen hing die Nacht.
Schon ſtund im Nebelkleid die Eiche
Wie ein getürmter Rieſe da,
Wo Finſternis aus dem Geſträuche
Mit hundert ſchwarzen Augen ſah.

Der Mond von einem Wolkenhügel
Sah ſchläfrig aus dem Duft hervor:
Die Winde ſchwangen leiſe Flügel,
Umſauſten ſchauerlich mein Ohr.
Die Nacht ſchuf tauſend Ungeheuer—

* My children dear, I come at last,
E'en though the winter's chilly blast
In shelter warm doth bid us stay.
We 'll sit beside the cheery fire
And mutual joys untold inspire
And love like angels all the day.
And little wreaths of flowers we'll wind
And lovely little nosegays bind;
Like little children we will play.

Doch tauſendfacher war mein Mut;
Mein Geiſt war ein verzehrend Feuer,
Mein ganzes Herz zerfloß in Glut.*

In spite of the late hour of Goethe's arrival in Sesenheim he found the two oldest daughters of the pastor still sitting before the door; they seemed not much surprised, but he was, when Friederike whispered to Olivia, loud enough for him to hear: "What did I tell you? There he is." Early the next morning Friederike called him for a walk. "With a little attention I was able on this morning to behold Friederike's character in all its phases, so much so that to me she was always the same during the whole time. . . . Her nature, her figure never appeared more charming than when she passed along a raised footpath; the gracefulness of her movements seemed to vie with the flower-bedecked earth, and the inexhaustible cheerfulness of her countenance with the blue sky. The refreshing atmosphere which she breathed she brought with her to the house, and it was soon noticeable that she knew how to solve trifling difficulties and to obliterate the impression of little unpleasantnesses.

"The purest joy that one can have in a beloved person is to see that person giving joy to others. Friederike's bearing in the company was universally helpful. On walks she hastened hither and thither, an animating spirit, and

* Quick throbbed my heart—to horse! up! leap!
Swift as a warrior to the fight!
The evening lulled the earth to sleep,
And o'er the mountains hung the night.
In robe of mist the oak upreared
Its towering limbs of monstrous size,
From every bush the darkness peered
With countless hollow, ghostly eyes.

Above the mountain-cloud the moon
Looked sleepy through the misty heap;
The wind's soft wings were beating soon,
Making my flesh with terror creep.
The night formed myriad monsters dire,
But still I nought of fear did know;
My brain was a consuming fire,
My heart dissolved in fervent glow.

she knew how to fill in the gaps which might arise here and there. The lightness of her movements we have already spoken of; she was lightest when she ran. Just as the deer seems most completely in its element when it flies lightly over the growing grain, she, too, seemed to express her character most clearly when she hastened, running lightly over meadows and slopes to get something forgotten, to seek something lost, to call a straying couple, or to do something else that was needed."

It made Goethe ineffably happy to be by the side of this sunny creature. And as Friederike also felt in her heart the magnetic charm of the poet, who was giving himself to her, it was only natural that what each had long felt for the other was openly confessed in a moment of love, and that this confession was sealed with a most hearty embrace. This time it was harder than ever for the lovers to part:

Der Abſchied, wie bedrängt, wie trübe!
Aus deinen Blicken ſprach dein Herz.
In deinen Küſſen, welche Liebe,
O welche Wonne, welcher Schmerz!
Du gingſt, ich ſtund, und ſah zur Erden,
Und ſah dir nach mit naſſem Blick;
Und doch, welch Glück! geliebt zu werden,
Und lieben, Götter, welch ein Glück! *

The separation was less keenly felt because of a lively correspondence, which, according to Goethe's account, increased his love, as Friederike's letters breathed the same charm as her immediate presence. Of the many lyric pearls, which without doubt were interwoven in the correspondence, only one, apparently, has been preserved, the

* How sad the parting hour did prove!
For through thine eyes thy heart spoke plain.
And in thy kisses, O what love!
What ecstasy, what burning pain!
My eyes sank down at thy farewell,
And through my tears I saw thee go.
In love returned what raptures dwell!
Ye gods, what bliss in loving so!

one which accompanied the present of a painted ribbon, *Kleine Blumen, kleine Blätter*. In the original form of the song he prays to fate that the life of their love may not be the life of a rose. It was certainly an honest, sincere prayer, but he had not reckoned with the unconquerable powers within him.

May came and enticed the lover oftener than ever before into the gardens and fields of Sesenheim. Nature had decked herself with all the charms of a beautiful spring. In eloquent words the poet praises the clearness of the heavens, the splendour of the landscape, the ethereal mornings, the mild evenings, of those well-remembered days. And in his *Mailied* we can hear echoes of the same rapture, ending in a joyous jubilee of love and life:

So liebt die Lerche
Gesang und Luft,
Und Morgenblumen
Den Himmelsduft,

Wie ich dich liebe
Mit warmem Blut,
Die du mir Jugend
Und Freud' und Mut

Zu neuen Liedern
Und Tänzen gibst,
Sei ewig glücklich
Wie du mich liebst! *

* The lark less loveth
Sweet song and air,
And bloom of morning
Heaven's fragrance rare,

Than I love thee
With fond desire,
For thou renewest
My youthful fire:

Giv'st joy, and spirit
For song and glee;
Be ever happy
As thou lov'st me!

The happiness of the lovers was at its zenith. Just then Friederike was taken ill,—it was thought with consumption,—and the poet, who had been as one walking in his sleep, was suddenly aroused to sober thought. He was deeply pained when it dawned upon him that what for Friederike was downright earnest, for him was only a beautiful dream. He went to Sesenheim at Whitsuntide, and during a stay of several weeks began slowly to wrestle with his conscience for its consent to forsake Friederike. It is sad and yet fascinating to follow the struggle through the letters which he at the time wrote to his Socrates, Salzmann. In the first he says: "It is not very cheerful about me here; the little one continues sadly ill and that makes everything look out of joint. To say nothing of the *conscia mens*, not, alas! *recti*,* which is ever present with me. Yet my head is still above water.

"I danced with the eldest on Whitmonday from two o'clock in the afternoon till twelve o'clock at night without ceasing, except during the few pauses for refreshments. Justice von Reschwoog had lent his drawing-room, we had picked up some good travelling musicians, and so we danced with the fury of a storm. I forgot my fever and since then it has been better, too. . . . And yet if I could say, 'I am happy,' that would be better than all else.

"'Who is 't can say, "I am at the worst"?' says Edgar [in *King Lear*]. That is also a consolation, dear friend. My head is like a weather-cock, when a storm is approaching and the gusts of wind are changeable. . . ."

A week later he writes: "A few words are, at all events, better than nothing. Here I am driven from pillar to post. . . . The world is so beautiful! so beautiful! if one could only enjoy it! This often vexes me, and I often read myself edifying lectures about making the most of the present, about this doctrine, which is so indispensable to our happiness, but which many a professor of ethics fails to grasp and which none propounds with clearness. Adieu."

But the melancholy mood is obstinate. A fortnight

* *Cf.* Virgil, *Æn.*, i, 604: mens sibi conscia recti.—C.

later we read in a third letter: "I am coming, or I am not, or—when this is all over I shall know better about it than now. It is raining without and within, and the hideous west winds rustle in the grape-leaves before my window and my *animula vagula* * is like the little weather-cock over yonder on the church-tower; 'turn thee! turn thee!' thus it goes the livelong day, although the 'bow thee! stretch thee!' went out of fashion some time ago. . . ."

The longer he stays the more the beautiful dream fades away. The fifth week he writes:

"It is now about time that I should return, and I intend to, and intend to, but what is the use of intending, when I see the faces about me? The condition of my heart is peculiar, my health is as wavering as ever, but the world is more beautiful than I have seen it in a long time.

"A most pleasant country, people who love me, a cycle of joys. 'Are not the dreams of your childhood all fulfilled?' I often ask myself when feasting my eyes on this heaven of happiness. 'Are not these the fairy gardens you longed for?' They are, they are. I feel it, dear friend, and feel that one is not a whit happier when he obtains what he has desired. The makeweight! the makeweight! which fate throws into the scales with every joy we have. Dear friend, it requires a good deal of courage to keep from becoming embittered in this world. . . ."

He returns to Strasburg with the consciousness that his relations with Friederike are but the product of his fancy and must end in sorrow. The thought of it begins to worry him. But the power of sweet habit outweighs, and he continues the lovely intercourse, more by letters, however, than by visits. His stay in Strasburg was approaching the end; just before his departure and his last visit in Sesenheim he wrote to Salzmann: "My eyes will not stay open and it is only nine. Oh, how I love regularity! Out late last night, routed out of bed early this morning by plans! The inside of my head looks like my room; I cannot find even a scrap of paper, except this blue. But

* *Cf.* Spartianus, *Hadr.*, 25: Animula vagula, blandula, etc.—C.

any paper will do to tell you that I love you, and this doubly well; you know what it was intended for. Enjoy yourself till I see you again. I am not altogether happy at heart. I am too wide awake not to feel that I am grasping after shadows. And yet—to-morrow at seven my horse is saddled, and then adieu!"

How was the parting from Friederike? In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* we read: "In such craving and confusion I could not forego seeing Friederike once more. Those were painful days, of which I no longer have any remembrance. When I reached down my hand to her again from my horse, there were tears in her eyes, and I felt very miserable." Easy enough to understand, for, as he told Frau von Stein eight years later, he left Friederike at a moment when it almost cost her life. Goethe did not have the courage at that time to explain to Friederike frankly the futility of the bond between them. He waited till he reached Frankfort and then wrote her. He received an answer which lacerated his heart. "It was the same hand, the same mind, the same feeling which had been nurtured for me and by me. I now felt for the first time what a loss she suffered and saw no possibility of making it good, indeed of even alleviating it. She was always vividly present to my mind; I always felt the lack of her and, worst of all, could not forgive myself for my own unhappiness. Gretchen had been taken away from me, Annette had forsaken * me, here for the first time I myself was to blame. I had wounded the most beautiful heart to its depths and so the period of gloomy remorse . . . was most painful, indeed unbearable."

But to make himself worthy of inward absolution he punished himself more severely than life did by the creation in his literary works, of the weak, faithless lovers, Weislingen and Clavigo, who came to an end by poison and by the steel of the avenger. But even in this way his struggle

* Goethe was always accustomed to represent himself as forsaken by Kätchen Schönkopf, because she had given her hand to another soon after his separation from her.

was not rewarded by complete absolution. The torturing memories returned ever and anon, and years later drove him, as we shall see, once more to the simple Alsatian parsonage, where Friederike's noble, reconciled soul finally liberated him from them.

What separated Goethe from Friederike? Why did he feel that there was no possibility of uniting his life and hers?

The shallowest answers have been given to these questions. Some say that as the son of Frankfort patricians he considered himself too aristocratic; others, that he despaired of ever gaining the approbation of his father; others, that Friederike was not his intellectual equal. But, in view of the deep, warm love which thrilled him through and through, and of the vacillating spirit that came over him as early as May, 1771, it is not worth while to enter into a detailed discussion of these attempts at explanation. In truth, the same mental process repeated itself as in the case of Kätchen. In this instance Goethe has abundantly lightened the task of discovering his final motive by the gentle hint in the Sesenheim idyll with reference to the tale, *Die neue Melusine*. Let us recall the gist of the story. A man makes the acquaintance of a maiden with whom he is extraordinarily pleased. "Alone with her on a green meadow, covered with grass and flowers, shut in by rocks, with the music of running water in his ears, what heart under such surroundings would have remained unfeeling?" But the lovely creature belongs to the dwarf kingdom, and the man can remain with her only on condition that he make up his mind to become as small as she is. He decides to do so. By means of a ring, which she puts on his finger, he becomes a dwarf. The maiden leads him into her kingdom, to the presence of her father, the king of the dwarfs. The king greets him as his future son-in-law and sets the wedding for the following day. "What a terrible state of mind I found myself in all at once, when I heard them speak of marriage!" He is about to escape, but ants, the allies of the father-in-law, check him and will not let him go. "Now I, small as I was, was in the hands of still smaller beings."

There is no help for him, he must be married. "Now let me pass over all ceremonies; enough, we were married. But merry and gay as our life was, nevertheless there were lonely hours, when one is led to reflect, and there happened to me what had never before happened to me, but what and how you shall hear. Everything about me completely corresponded to my present form and needs, the bottles and goblets well-proportioned for a tiny tippler, indeed, if you will, better proportioned than with us. The dainty mouthfuls tasted excellent to my little palate; a kiss from the little mouth of my wife was O! so sweet! and I do not deny, that the novelty made these conditions most agreeable to me. But withal, alas! I had not forgotten my former estate. I felt within me a standard of former greatness which made me restless and unhappy. Now I understood for the first time what the philosophers might mean by their ideals, by which men are said to be so tormented. I possessed an ideal self and often in my dreams seemed to myself like a giant. In short, my wife, the ring, my dwarf figure, and so many other bonds made me completely unhappy, so that I began to think seriously of escaping." He files the ring in two and regains his former size.

Here we have the explanation. Goethe had formed an ideal for himself, which it seemed to him would be destroyed by a union with Friederike. The giant had no desire to lead the life of a dwarf. Hence the inward unrest, the vacillation of his soul, and the feeling that he was grasping after shadows, when he began to think of the consequences of his love. "In what a terrible state of mind I found myself, when I heard them speak of marriage!" His ideals tormented him, they drove him irresistibly to plunge into the flood of fate, to try there his titanic powers and live up to his capabilities.

In the presence of such a demonic impulse toward life and freedom, which asserts itself as a natural necessity, it is out of place to speak of right or wrong. Great geniuses, less masters of themselves than other men are, must, like the mighty forces of nature, follow the laws inherent in

themselves. They are sent to redeem humanity, while in the fulfilment of their mission they become entangled in guilt. So also Goethe. And for his trespasses, even for those into which he fell with a pure heart, as with Friederike, he had to pay dearly. Retributive justice, by giving him a vivid imagination and a most delicately sensitive soul, had foreordained that he should atone bitterly for every fault, more bitterly than most men, including many of his most intelligent friends, have ever believed. In view of the sunshine which flooded the high places of his life, people have been too prone to overlook the gloomy clouds, which, now and then almost terrifying, and to the superficial observer almost inexplicable, arose from the depths.

The nobler and purer Friederike's nature, the more she suffered in silence, the more the poet saw her image surrounded with the glory of a madonna. From the two Marys in *Götz* and *Clavigo* she ascends gradually until at the end of *Faust* she reaches in Gretchen her heavenly transfiguration.

# XI

## DEPARTURE FROM STRASBURG

Goethe's friends desire that he become a professor in the university—He prefers to carry out his father's plans—Doctor's dissertation—Disputation—Licentiate instead of doctor—Tour of Upper Alsatia—Return to Frankfort.

IN more than one respect Goethe was tempted while in Strasburg to fix upon an entirely different career in life. Not only did his relations to Friederike threaten to interrupt his most suitable development, but so did also plans of his older friends and acquaintances. The wonderful talents and high culture of the Frankfort student, little as he appeared at other lectures than those on medicine, had attracted the attention of Oberlin, professor of philosophy, and Koch, professor of history and constitutional law, and had led to closer relations with these men. To his associations with Oberlin, who beside philosophy was deeply interested in the older German language and literature, Goethe owed his first knowledge of the Minnesingers, who had just been redeemed from the oblivion of several centuries, *Das Nibelungenlied*, and other medieval classics. He also learned much from Koch, and his passionate grasp and independent and intelligent mastery of the material offered led these learned men to consider him exceptionally well fitted for an academic career. In conjunction with Salzmann they laid their plans before him, opening up the prospect of a professorship of history, constitutional law, and rhetoric in Strasburg and at the same time of a position in the higher service of the French Government. But the days when a professorship had seemed to him the goal of

his ambition were gone by. A chair in the University of Strasburg, where the professors were so narrow-minded, and a position in the French Government after he had become filled with a strong aversion to everything French, had very little charm for him. Consequently he rejected the plan, alluring though it would once have been. He thought his freedom of movement would be better guarded if he should fulfil his father's wishes and settle down for the present as an advocate in Frankfort.

The final conditions were yet to be met. He must needs become a doctor of jurisprudence, and to obtain the degree a dissertation was necessary. Having so little interest in the special problems of jurisprudence, he chose a general topic, half in the field of church history, half in the field of constitutional law. The theme was a strange one. Goethe, following in the path of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*, wished to establish the thesis that the lawgiver not only may, but must, fix upon a certain cult, which neither the clergy nor the laity shall be permitted to renounce. But there should be no investigation of one's own thoughts and feelings. By this arrangement he thought he could anticipate all disputes between church and state, of which he had seen enough since childhood, and at the same time provide for the necessary freedom of conscience. He elaborated this thought with much industry and critical acumen, having no other censor in mind than his father.

The faculty, which had to examine all dissertations presented, not only from the scientific standpoint but also from the standpoint of the common welfare, raised objections to the thesis, and Dean Ehrlen gave Goethe the friendly advice not to publish it, but, instead of presenting it for the doctor's degree, to apply for the licentiate's degree by means of a disputation on certain theses. Goethe acted upon the suggestion with delight. For he himself had deep misgivings with regard to his dissertation, and was able to console his father with the promise to enlarge and improve it later, and then publish it. Goethe, with the help of his coach, had soon selected sixty-five theses

to take the place of the dissertation. Certain of them, such as, "Law is by far the most glorious of all studies," may perhaps be attributed to the coach, unless they are biting irony. The proposition that legislation belongs exclusively to the prince is not to be wondered at in a period of absolutism. We are more astonished that the prince should be the sole interpreter of the law, and that to prevent reason from becoming folly each new prince should be required to promulgate new interpretations in every generation. But the young man, who, in his poetry, was an enthusiastic apostle of liberty and the people, desires to tone down his absolutist colouring by means of the ostentatious thesis: "Salus rei publicæ suprema lex esto," * without revealing who is to decide what is the *salus rei publicæ* and who is to compel the prince to fulfil the *esto*.

Confronted by such quaint theses, partly dashed off in a spirit of genial humour, it was not very hard for Lerse, even if he was no jurist, to drive his friend into such a tight place in course of the disputation that Goethe interrupted his flow of Latin with the remark: "Brother, I believe you are going to hector me." The public ceremony, which occurred on the sixth of August, passed off with great merriment and levity, says Goethe, and the young poet became a licentiate in law. As the titles of licentiate and doctor had equal value in Germany, he was from now on called, even officially, Doctor Goethe. The disputation seems to have been followed by an inaugural banquet and that joyful excursion with his friends into Upper Alsatia, of which Goethe tells us in the eleventh book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. He went to Molsheim, Kolmar, Schlettstadt, Ensisheim, and then to the Ottilienberg, from the top of which he once more cast his eyes with great pleasure over the fair fields of Alsatia, while the distant blue of the Swiss mountains awoke in him a new longing.

Thus he had wandered over Alsatia almost from one end to the other and had finished his sight-seeing. Paris no longer occupied his fancy, since he had come to despise the

* Let the public weal be the supreme law.

French more than ever. From Strasburg he went straight home.

He left the dear land as one born to a new life. The old period of illness, limitations, oppression, was past. A new era of health, freedom, and greatness had dawned, in which he, with exuberant might, strove toward his lofty goal. The sacred oracle, which had spoken consolation to him in his first hour in Strasburg, was verified. It had become necessary for him to enlarge the place of his tent and to lengthen his cords; for he had spread abroad on the right hand and on the left.

# XII

## ADVOCATE AND JOURNALIST

Goethe the advocate—*Götz*—Other literary activities—*Wanderers Sturmlied*—Merck—The Darmstadt "saints"—Goethe in Darmstadt—*Die Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*—Goethe's contributions to the journal—Review of the *Gedichte von einem polnischen Juden*—Other reviews—the journal changes hands and declines—Goethe goes to Wetzlar.

WHEN the young doctor again entered his native city in the middle of August he was not alone. In Mainz he had taken such a fancy to a boy who played the harp—just as Wilhelm Meister did to the harpist and Mignon—that he brought him along to lodge in his father's house during the coming fair. His mother, who foresaw what his father in course of time would think of the strange musician, succeeded in compromising between her son's strange act of kind-heartedness and her husband's sense of order and propriety by lodging the boy in the neighbourhood. "The noble woman," says Goethe, "well pleased with her first attempt at compromise and conciliation, little suspected that she should very soon have the greatest need of this art." This was not, however, the case in the beginning; during the first few months there was complete harmony between father and son. The foundation had been laid for a regular civic career. Immediately upon his arrival Goethe had settled down as an advocate, and with the help of his father and a secretary had begun to practise. Furthermore, his father was very proud of the beautiful manuscripts which he had brought back from Strasburg: the scholarly dissertation, many

smaller essays, translations, journals of travel, broadsides, and poems. He arranged everything neatly and urged his son to complete and publish his many writings.

This, however, was anything but Goethe's ambition, his reluctance to appear in print having been intensified by Herder's severe criticism. And the completion? How should he get time for that when a hundred new subjects and plans were stirring his soul and pressing him to work them out? Ever since the days in Strasburg his mind had been occupied with two important figures of the sixteenth century, *Götz* and *Faust*. *Faust* gave way to *Götz*. The problem of *Faust* was too great to be solved otherwise than through a slow process of evolution, while *Götz* might be completed in a shorter time. Besides, the poet was very strongly attracted by the chivalrous personality of Berlichingen as well as by the fresh atmosphere of his time.

So with all the enthusiasm of his nature he began to cast the history of this "noble German" in dramatic form, at first, as usual, without putting pen to paper. With fiery zeal he unrolled his outlines to Cornelia, declaiming whole scenes, until she begged him earnestly, instead of always launching forth into the air, to write some of it down. He wrote the first scenes and she was pleased with them, but, wise as she was, expressed her strong disbelief that he would have the perseverance to continue any further. Her doubts stimulated him; he kept at work, and within six weeks, before the end of 1771, it was finished. Then he sent copies to his older friends and awaited their judgment.

Hardly was *Götz* done when he began on *Sokrates;* he may also have done something more on *Cäsar*, which he had begun in Strasburg, so that of dramas alone four tremendous subjects, *Faust*, *Götz*, *Sokrates*, and *Cäsar*, were upon his mind. Besides, he issued the pamphlets, with which we are familiar, on Shakespeare and German architecture, composed songs, translated from Ossian and Pindar, and with the beginning of the new year plunged into a busy activity as reviewer. And who can tell what other things

were whirling through his brain and how many of them were ever put on paper? For he characterises his small compositions of that period as a far-reaching world poetry. Toward the end of November, 1771, he writes to Salzmann: "My *nisus* forward is so intense that I can seldom compel myself to stop for breath." And in February, 1772: "It is impossible for the most rapid scribe to keep a diary of my conditions."

From this inner seething and fermentation he sought relief in long walks. For days at a time he lived on the roads like a messenger, tramping about from place to place between the Taunus Mountains and the Rhine and Main. Not infrequently he roamed about through Frankfort in the same way, came in at one gate, ate his dinner at one of the large hotels, and then walked out of the city at another gate. On the way he would sing to himself strange hymns and dithyrambs in the style of Pindar, who together with Homer and Shakespeare now occupied his whole soul. One of these songs, which Goethe, when growing old, too severely characterised as half nonsense, has been preserved as *Wanderers Sturmlied*. Amid the fury of the storm breathes the youthful poet's proud confidence in his genius.

His strolls assumed definite purpose when he became more intimately acquainted with Darmstadt. This came about through Johann Heinrich Merck,[40] a man who for several years exerted a greater influence over Goethe than any of his other friends. Merck, born in 1741 in Darmstadt, the son of an apothecary, had married in early life a girl from French Switzerland, and in 1768 was invested with the office of military paymaster in his native city. He was a man of acute understanding, poetic talent, and fine taste. His intellectual interests embraced the most varied fields. In literature, the fine arts, and descriptive sciences he was equally at home. He translated a great deal from the English, published essays in esthetic criticism, discussed certain phases of art history, and wrote studies and descriptions of prehistoric animal remains, and a great number of reviews for the leading literary magazines. He also

embarked upon imaginative composition, wrote fables, stories, and satires, so that the list of his writings is of considerable length. But the high regard which he enjoyed among his contemporaries was due less to his actual achievements than to his personality. If correct judgment, that comprehends the reality in things and men with certainty, always carries with it superiority, this must be doubly true in an epoch, which more than any other delighted in vague feelings and hazy views and conceptions. If we consider, further, that he was very agreeable and witty in society and very efficient in business, it is not difficult to understand why the best men and women, such as Goethe, Herder, Wieland, Karl August, the Hessian landgravine Karoline, Duchess Anna Amalia, and many others, prized him as a man of extraordinary worth and cherished the warmest feelings for him. It is true, the same gifts which made him valuable could also render him terrible. His penetrating eye readily discovered the weaknesses and faults of men and, when not bound by considerations of respect, he knew how to lay them bare with cold contempt. Likewise he was able by a sober criticism to destroy at a single blow any playful amusement, unfounded enthusiasm, sentimentality, or indulgent loyalty. In the light of this side of his nature Goethe likened him to Mephistopheles. How justly, appears not only from the well-known traits described by Goethe, but also from the remark of Karoline Flachsland, who writes of him: "If we have any pleasure, even if it is insignificant (what is the difference?), he always injects something sour into it." One almost fancies one is listening to Gretchen in *Faust*. This Mephistophelian trait was intensified by many untoward experiences. In the years that concern us at present it was especially the unhappy relations with his wife which embittered him; later in life unfortunate business ventures contributed to his malignity. And yet at bottom his heart was good and loving and even capable of most tender feeling. To his friends he could be touchingly devoted. For Goethe especially he cherished the warmest love all his life long.

Once when, after a long separation, he saw Goethe's head in the medallion by Necker, he wept for joy and immediately had impressions made from it so that he and his acquaintances might henceforth use it for a seal. This remarkable man was also distinguished for his peculiar appearance: tall and lean, with prominent, pointed nose, and eyes bright blue shading into grey, which, according to Goethe's expression, gave something tiger-like to his searching glance. Association with him was full of profit for Goethe. True, he did not, like Herder, arouse his slumbering powers, nor did he give his spirit new nourishment and guidance, but he gave him, instead, other things, which at the time were of the utmost value to him. While, on the one hand, he helped Goethe by his cool judgment to guard against the misty monsters and will-o'-the-wisps of the Storm-and-Stress world, on the other hand, by his high standards, he kept him from squandering his genius on mediocre and inferior subjects, and, by constant urging and admonition, from an endless dissipation of his energies. Goethe followed the counsel of his older friend the more willingly, as he felt and knew that his bitter and rude criticisms were born of love and admiration.

The iridescence of Merck's nature is most plainly seen in the fact that he, in whom reason was so dominant, formed intimate friendships with most sentimental women, such as Fräulein von Roussillon, maid of honour to Landgravine Karoline of Hesse-Darmstadt, and Fräulein von Ziegler, maid of honour to the Landgravine of Hesse-Homburg. More changeable was his friendship with Karoline Flachsland, Herder's betrothed, who lived with her brother-in-law, Privy Councillor Hesse.

The three young girls and Merck's intellectual wife formed, however, at the same time a coterie about another man in Darmstadt, whose disposition was more nearly like their own, the gallant Leuchsenring, who revelled in beautiful thoughts and emotions, a tender nature, saturated with the sweet pap of Georg Jacobi and the tears of Klopstock. Everything great, wild, or sublime, that transcended a

gentle mediocrity, was to him an abomination. For this reason Goethe mocks him in *Pater Brey* as the man who "desires to reconcile mountain and valley, cover over all rough places with plaster of Paris and lime," or, more rudely in the *Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern*, "would gladly all of them modify, the swine into lambkins rectify." He always sided with the women. As with those of Darmstadt, so with Julie Bondeli, the friend of Rousseau and Wieland, and with Sophie Laroche, author of *Sternheim*, at one time Wieland's betrothed. The letters and ribbons from his sentimental friends he kept about him, well arranged in several caskets, and exhibited them to others with worshipful mien and many beautiful words. Over this "enraptured butterfly" the ethereal maidens of Darmstadt raved; they dreamed themselves into a pastoral child-world with him, an Elysian fairyland, where they built bowers of friendship, in which he was their apostle and they his saints. Each of the sentimental maidens had, after the fashion of the time, her poetical name: Fräulein von Roussillon was called Uranie; Fräulein von Ziegler, Lila; Karoline, Psyche. The most sentimental of the sentimental was Lila. She had her tomb and a throne in her garden, her arbours and roses, and a lamb which ate and drank with her. She worshipped her friends and the moon on her knees and observed feasts and fasts on the arrival and departure of her guests.

Into this "community of saints" Goethe was introduced by Merck in the spring of 1772, and a single meeting was all that was required, especially as Apostle Leuchsenring was away on a journey, to make the young doctor the declared favourite of the sentimental friends. For he, too, could be plaintive, tender, and sentimental with especial ease at that time, as the embers of his love for Friederike were still smouldering in his heart. His beauty and genius did the rest. Because of his frequent long walks, which now extended to Darmstadt, they called him the wanderer or pilgrim. He usually protracted his visits several days, and when he sat down on the bench in front of Merck's house

the female friends would quickly gather about him and give audience to genius. Every day they took a walk out into the forest of Bessungen, and offered up sacrifices upon the rocks, which the maidens, and Goethe following their example, had severally appropriated, rowed upon the quiet pond, and the maidens danced in a circle about him. If he then sang his songs, or if he improvised to them on poetry, love, and friendship, the shady wood was transformed in their fancy into Tempe and Elysium. When the beautiful wanderer started home his young admirers would accompany him out through the city gate and there with kisses and tears take leave of their "heaven-bestowed friend." Goethe reared a Pindaric monument to those innocent, sentimental days in the three odes, *Elysium*, *Pilgers Morgenlied*, and *Felsweihegesang*.*

Little did he suspect when he met Merck that the acquaintance would bear such fair fruit; for originally they united for war and conflict, in which only the stout hearts of men were available. The new revolutionary party felt a certain need of finding a journal in which they could proclaim their principles to wider circles. An opportunity was offered in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, to which the publisher, Privy Councillor Deinet, wished to give new life. It seems that Merck, won over to the new ideas by Herder, and Georg Schlosser, a convert of Goethe's, made the necessary negotiations with Deinet. Beginning with January 1, 1772, the *Anzeigen* became the organ of the young generation, with Merck as director. The journal appeared twice a week and was devoted exclusively to reviews. Goethe tells how these were prepared: "Whoever had read the book first, made a report, often another reported on the same book; it was discussed, compared with other publications, and if a definite result was arrived at, some one undertook the review. This accounts for the fact that several reviews are as thorough as they are spritely, as pleasing as they are satisfactory. I was frequently made

* *Cf.* Lyon, *Goethes Verh. z. Klop.*, where the influence of Klopstock on these poems is clearly shown.—C.

secretary; my friends allowed me to interrupt their work with my jokes and, when I felt equal to a subject especially dear to my heart, to present my views independently." This occurred with great frequency. For we may say with a reasonable degree of certainty that he was the chief contributor to the journal. His articles breathed the happy exuberance of youth and the commanding power of genius, and when his lash fell upon the venerable perukes it made the powder fly. Herder remarked: "Goethe is for the most part a haughty young lord with the terrible spurs of a gamecock." He did most cruel execution on good, sweet Georg Jacobi, whom he dispatched with one hard blow as a woman and a weakling. Beside the laughing or angry thrusting aside of the old and the weak there is at the same time an uncommon amount of depth and beauty in the reviews. They were rarely reviews in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather the effusions of his youthful heart. Often he forgets his real purpose, even the place where he is writing, and, as though he were speaking to himself in solitude, he bursts forth into most impassioned monologue. Thus, in his review of the *Gedichte von einem polnischen Juden*, he launches out suddenly into the solemn confession and prayer:

"Raise up, O Genius of our fatherland, a young man, who, full of youthful power and cheerfulness, shall be the best companion in his own circle, suggest the most pleasing game, sing the most joyful song, and be the life of the chorus in the roundelay; to whom the best dancer shall joyfully extend her hand . . . ; to captivate whom the beautiful, the witty, and the cheerful maid shall all exert their charms; who shall also permit his sensitive heart to be ensnared, but shall proudly burst his bonds in the moment, when, awaking from his poetic dream, he shall find that his goddess is only beautiful, only witty, only cheerful; whose vanity, offended by the indifference of a reserved maiden, shall importune her, until, through forced and feigned sighs and tears, through myriad civilities by day and languishing music and songs by night, he shall finally

win her—and then desert her, merely because she was reserved; who shall then proclaim and ridicule to us all his joys, victories, and defeats, all his follies and waverings, with the courage of an undaunted heart. We should rejoice in the fickle man for whom a single womanly virtue is not enough. But then, O Genius, that it may be revealed that not shallowness nor weakness of heart is to blame for his fickleness, let him find a maiden worthy of him. If holier feelings drive him from the turmoil of society out into the solitude, let him on his pilgrimage discover a maiden whose soul is all goodness, whose form is all grace, who has found happiness in the ministrations of love in the quiet family circle, who as the favourite, friend, and support of her mother is a second mother in the home; whose soul, ever lovingly occupied, draws all hearts irresistibly to her, of whom poet and sage would be glad to learn, and whose innate virtue and inherent grace they would delight to see. Oh, if in her hours of solitary repose she feels, that with all her radiation of love, she still lacks something, a heart, that young and warm as hers, longs for the coming yet still unrevealed joys of the world, in close and inspiring society with whom she could strive after all the golden prospects of eternal union, enduring harmony, and immortal love!

"Let them find each other, and at the first meeting they will have a vague but deep feeling of what an ideal of happiness each finds in the other, and will never part. And then let him murmur in anticipation, hope, and joy, 'what no man can utter in words, no man in tears, and no man in a full, lingering, soulful gaze.' * There will be truth in his songs and living beauty, not gay, soap-bubble ideals, such as float about in hundreds of German songs.

"But are there such maids? Can there be such young men?"

Only at this point does he awake from his dreams and continue: "It is here a question of the Polish Jew, and we had almost lost sight of him."

On another occasion he closes the criticism of a miserable

* Quotation from Klopstock's ode, *An Cidli*.—C.

work on Homer with the words: "O ye great Greeks, and thou, Homer, Homer! But even thus translated, annotated, cited, explained, so sorely wounded, bruised, lacerated, torn, driven and dragged over stones and through dust and pools—his flesh does not decay, no worm gnaws at him; for the blissful gods care for him even after death." He is also furious at those who think they can explain the lives of great men by a few formulas, such as apply to average creatures. Thus he says in the review of *Die Liebe des Vaterlands*, by Sonnenfels: "Lycurgus, Solon, Numa appear as *collegæ Gymnasii* [schoolmasters], who dictate *exercitia* according to the capacity of their pupils. To see in the results of the lives of these great men, whom we know only by obscure traditions, principle, political principle, purpose everywhere, and explain them as such in a polemical writing with the clearness and definiteness of a labourer who explains cabinet secrets, state relations, and intrigues, over a glass of beer! To throw the light of reason upon secrets (for what great historical data are not secrets to us?) to which only the most profound spirit can penetrate with prophetic intuition!" Similarly we read in another review: "Without any feeling of what such a man has been, without the faintest conception of what such a man may be, the writer has here produced a most miserable eulogy. The career of this strange genius, his victory over so many difficulties, his melancholy dissatisfaction with all success, becomes under the pen of our scribbler a very commonplace *cursus humaniorum et bonarum artium*, and his peculiarly characteristic head becomes a well-wrinkled, respectable, everyday mask." Rousseau's key-note of Storm and Stress finds expression in his cry: "The state of religion, the political conditions most closely related to it, the oppression of laws, the still greater oppression of social affiliations, and a thousand other things will never permit the polished gentleman and the polished nation to be original; they muffle the voice of nature, and erase every feature with which a characteristic picture could be produced." Hence the greater emphasis in other passages on the demand that

the poet be his own creature; he must sing like the bird in the air, he must make it his sole business to attain to the perfect development of his powers without regard to public or applause. That is also the best esthetics that teaches the artist to liberate himself. "For here the artist is all-important; he must feel no joy in life except in his art, and, absorbed in his instrument, must live in it with all his powers and feelings. What does it matter, whether or not the gaping public, when it has ceased to gape, can account to itself for its gaping?"

The artist's only other way to learn is, not from philosophical dogmas, but from the masters of his art. "Since these are not to be had everywhere, let the artist and amateur give us a *περὶ ἑαυτοῦ* [personal account] of his endeavours, of the difficulties which have most impeded his progress, of the powers with which he has overcome, of the chance which has helped him, of the spirit which has come over him in certain moments and illuminated him for the rest of his life, till at last, by degrees, he has risen to mighty possessions, and, as king and conqueror, exacts tribute from all correlated arts, indeed from all nature." These would indeed be gold mines of empiric esthetics. But what artists are willing and qualified for such self-analyses? For the highest and best things come from unconscious influences.

The success of the journal was not as great as the collaborators may have expected. To be sure, from Zurich to Hamburg it created in all the literary circles sensation, admiration, or anger, according to circumstances; to be sure, it hurled abroad a host of firebrands, which scorched here and kindled there, but it could not hope to penetrate the great mass of the public. For that the thoughts were too deep, the language too wild and obscure. A good many complaints were raised on this point. Furthermore, there came about, not as a result of religious scepticism (for the reviewers were not freethinkers), but because of their natural and human interpretation of all biblical and religious questions, and because of their hostility to all priestcraft,

violent conflicts with the clergy, which compelled them to omit theological critiques or make them colourless. But these things would not have cost the journal the further collaboration of the leaders. None of them was seriously inclined to sacrifice his talents to it continuously. As early as July Merck became tired of directing and resigned in favour of Schlosser. Herder was too far away, had too much other business, and intended to be married the following year. Schlosser was betrothed and was looking elsewhere for a position, and Goethe was the last man who would have considered the journalistic work to which he consented anything more than a reconnoitring skirmish into the enemy's territory. So at the end of the year the closely allied quadruple leadership retired from the journal and consigned it to more insignificant assistants under the wings of the Giessen professor, Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, whereby it lost its significance.

Goethe was still in the first glow of his critical occupation and in the first stages of his practice as a counsellor at law, when he again left Frankfort for some time. His father desired that as a preparation for a higher career he should work for several months in the Imperial Chamber in Wetzlar. Goethe was glad to comply with the wish, for he had never acquired any taste for his native city. "Frankfort is still the same old nest," he wrote to Salzmann, after he had been home just three months; "*spelunca*, a wretched hole." In the middle of May, 1772, he left for the little city on the Lahn where he was to experience a new idyll, for which "the fruitful land furnished the prose, a pure love the poetry."

# XIII

## LOTTE

Conditions at the Imperial Chamber—Goethe's love of nature—Favourite haunts—Intercourse with the people—Fondness for children—The Round Table—Kestner's portrait of Goethe—Charlotte Buff—Goethe's first meeting with her—Love at first sight—Lotte's faithfulness to her betrothed—Delicacy of the situation—Goethe's passionateness—His last evening with the betrothed couple—He goes away without taking leave, but sends a note explaining himself—*Götz von Berlichingen*—The second redaction—Merck shares expense of publication.

"IN the spring there came here from Frankfort a certain Goethe, by occupation a jurist, twenty-three years old, only son of a very rich father,* with the purpose, as his father thought, of gaining some knowledge of practice, but with the secret determination to study Homer, Pindar, etc., and do whatever else his genius, habits of thought, and heart might suggest to him."

The contrast between the practical, matter-of-fact father, and the son, yielding to his poetic instincts, cannot be more strikingly put than in these words, written in Wetzlar, in November, 1772, by Kestner, secretary to the ducal legation of Bremen. The father is unswerving in his determination to make a jurist of his son, the son in his to become a poet and man. "For from my youth on it was my dimly conscious desire and purpose to develop myself just as I am," says Goethe's poetic double in *Wilhelm Meister*.

Conditions at the Imperial Chamber were anything but

* The elder Goethe was only moderately well-off, but the expression is evidence of his son's aristocratic and generous style of living.

calculated to overcome the poet's reluctance to follow the legal profession. The German supreme court was a dust-covered, antiquated mechanism, irreparably damaged within and without. Its rusty wheels, which slowly ploughed through the sand of 16,000 undecided cases, gave forth a frightful creak at every turn. Plaintiffs, if they wished their cases to proceed, were obliged to apply to the spokes of the wheels the power of their money or their influence. The wretchedness of this "most noble" court had for decades been known throughout the empire, but Emperor Joseph II. was the first to take serious measures for remedying the evil. In 1767 a court of inspection, composed of twenty-four representatives of the estates of Germany, assembled in Wetzlar for the purpose of investigating, first of all, the weak points in the personnel of the Imperial Chamber. In the course of four years the investigation resulted in the arrest of three most noble judges for the worst kind of bribery. Meanwhile the musty atmosphere of Wetzlar had affected the court of inspection, producing profound discord among its members and bringing its business to a standstill.

Such was the condition of things which Goethe found, and he would have needed to be either an enthusiastic or an ambitious jurist, if, under such circumstances and having no official obligations, he had taken any interest whatever in the miserable proceedings [41] of this miserable court. He preferred to wait and see what occupations his genius and heart would suggest.

He engaged lodgings in the narrow, dirty Gewandsgasse, where sun and moon rarely shone. This was presumably not his own choice, but that of his great-aunt, the aged wife of Privy Councillor Lange, who, with her two daughters, lived on the next corner.

The uglier and darker it was in the town, the more he loved to live out in the country where Spring had lavished her full splendour. "Every tree, every hedge, is a bouquet of blossoms and one would fain be a cockchafer and float about in the sea of sweet fragrance." Just outside the

town there was a well (der Wildbacher),—"A well, to which I am drawn by a spell, like Melusine and her sisters. Not a day passes but I sit there an hour. Then the maids come from the town to get water, the most innocent and necessary occupation that ever the daughters of kings themselves engaged in. . . . Recently I came to the well and found a young maid, who had set her vessel on the lowest step and was looking about to see if some friend would not come along and help her lift it to her head. I went down and looked at her. 'Shall I help you, lass?' said I. She blushed and said: 'Oh, no, sir!'—No ceremony. —She adjusted the cushion on her head and I helped her. She thanked me and went away." These are passages from *Werther*, which without doubt reflect Wetzlar impressions and experiences. Another of Goethe's favourite spots was the garden of the Meckelsburg on the Lahnberg, from which there opened up a splendid view of the Lahn valley. But he was also fond of lying in the tall grass down by one of the little brooks emptying into the Lahn near Wetzlar, with Homer in his hand to lull his raging heart to rest. On his longer walks he came to the village of Garbenheim (Wahlheim in *Werther*), and there he found such a cozy little place beneath two ancient lindens in front of the church that he gradually came to prefer it to all others. On a cool morning, on a hot afternoon, on a warm moonlight night, he could be found there. He had a table and a chair brought from the inn near by and drank his coffee or milk, joked with the village children, sketched, or read.

These solitary enjoyments of the spring landscape did him infinite good. In the scenery, in the common people, and in the children there was so much peace and happiness and such a rich field for his poetic and artistic eye, that he desired nothing more. "The common people know me already and love me, especially the children," writes Werther. "Especially the children,"—no wonder. He had always been a friend of children. Among Stock's children and Merck's he had already made his conquests.

It was the same here. On his very first walk to Garbenheim he formed a friendship with three little boys, the youngest of whom was six months, the second about four years old. On leaving he gave each of them a kreutzer, that for the youngest to his mother, that she might buy a roll for the little one's supper. "Since then," he relates in *Werther*, "I often go there. The children are quite used to me. They get sugar when I drink coffee and share my bread and butter and clabber in the evening. On Sunday they always get the kreutzers, and if I am not there after prayers, the landlady has orders to distribute them. They are confidential and tell me everything, and I enjoy especially their passions and simple outbursts of desire, when more children collect from the village."

Soon he was to become the joyously greeted "uncle" of a group of pretty and noisy children in the city. His circle of acquaintance had gradually widened, although such was not his desire. In the Gasthof zum Kronprinzen there gathered every day for dinner a merry company of young practitioners, legation secretaries, plaintiffs, and defendants, who, like Goethe, were very little burdened with work; and the more they were bored by the confusion and formality of the Imperial Chamber and the court of inspection, the more they sought compensation for the dull atmosphere of court or business in jokes and games. They organised a Round Table: the commander-in-chief at the head, the chancellor at his side, then the most important state officials, finally the knights in the order of their seniority. Whoever was received into the circle was dubbed a knight with the usual formalities. A mill served as a castle, the miller as seneschal. A calendar contained a list of the members of the order. Goethe became a member and, because of *Götz von Berlichingen*, which he had probably brought along in manuscript, received the name of "Götz the Honest." Among the members Goethe became more intimately acquainted with Baron von Kielmannsegge, of Mecklenburg, a competent and reliable man; von Goué, of Hanover, secretary to the Brunswick Legation, an odd, dissipated

*bel-esprit*, who later became known by his *Masuren*, a companion piece to *Werther;* Gotter, of Thuringia, secretary to the Gotha Legation, whose writings, in the style of the French, were unimportant, but who was personally amiable and kind; and Born, son of the chief magistrate of Leipsic, a former acquaintance of Goethe's at the university, and like him a practitioner here in Wetzlar. Nominally members of the merry order of knights, but rarely present at the table, were the two legation secretaries, Jerusalem and Kestner. Wilhelm Jerusalem (born in 1747), son of the famous Brunswick abbot, and a friend of Lessing, Eschenburg, and the crown prince of Brunswick, highly self-conscious, extraordinarily sensitive, reticent, and pessimistic, had very little to do with Goethe, and there would scarcely be any need of mentioning him here, if his suicide a few weeks after Goethe's departure from Wetzlar had not suggested the writing of *Werther*. Goethe was, on the other hand, closely associated with Johann Christian Kestner. Kestner, like Merck, eight years older than Goethe, was a native of Hanover and an excellent man. Quiet and somewhat dry, as is natural in a busy jurist and official, zealous in the performance of his duty, clever, rational, thorough, he was a man of broad interests and spotless character. Since the beginning of the inspection in Wetzlar he had been employed as the secretary to Falcke, the ducal ambassador from Bremen, and the most able jurist in the court of inspection. He had left the table, not from a love of solitude, but because of the great amount of business incumbent upon him. Consequently he did not become acquainted with Goethe until, two or three weeks after the latter's arrival, he was one day taking a walk with Gotter to Garbenheim. "I found him there," he relates in the draught of a letter intended for his friend, von Hennings, "lying on his back in the grass under a tree conversing with some friends who stood around him,—an epicurean philosopher (von Goué), a stoic philosopher (von Kielmannsegge), and a hybrid between the two (Dr. König),—and thoroughly enjoying himself. They discussed many things, some of them very

interesting. This time, however, I formed no other judgment of him than that he is no ordinary man." Kestner attempts for his friend a detailed characterisation of the new practitioner. This characterisation offers the most striking and comprehensive picture that any contemporary has given us of young Goethe as he appeared between Strasburg and Weimar. It runs: "He has a great deal of talent, is a true genius, and a man of character. He possesses an extraordinarily lively imagination and hence generally expresses himself in images and similes. He also says himself that he always expresses himself figuratively, and can never express himself literally; but that when he is older he hopes to think and speak his thoughts as they are. In all his emotions he is impetuous, and yet has often great power over himself. His manner of thinking is noble. Free from prejudices, he acts as seems best to him, without troubling himself about reputation, fashion, or convention. All constraint is odious to him. He loves children and entertains himself with them a great deal. He is bizarre and there are several things in his manners and outward bearing that might make him disagreeable. But with children and women and many others he has nevertheless a good standing. He has a very great respect for the female sex. In *principiis* he is not yet firm and is only beginning to strive after a definite system. He has a very high opinion of Rousseau,—is, however, no blind worshipper of him. He is not what one calls orthodox, yet not out of pride or caprice, or for the sake of putting on airs. On certain fundamental things he unbosoms himself to very few, and does not like to disturb others in the contentment of their own ideas. It is true he hates scepticism, strives after truth and definite ideas on certain fundamental questions; thinks, too, that he already has clearly defined ideas on the most important of them, but, as far as I have observed, that is not yet the case. He never goes to church, nor to the Lord's Supper, and seldom prays; for he says: 'I am not hypocrite enough for that.' On certain subjects he is at times in repose; at times, however,

anything but that. He venerates the Christian religion, but not in the form in which our theologians present it. He believes in a future life and a better state. He strives after truth, but values the feeling of it higher than its demonstration. He has accomplished a great deal for his age, is well-informed and well-read, but he has thought and reasoned still more. His chief study has been belles-lettres and the fine arts, or rather all fields of knowledge except the so-called bread-and-butter sciences." On the margin of this rough draught Kestner added: "I was going to describe him, but it would take too long; for there is a great deal to be said of him. In a word, he is a very remarkable man."

This very remarkable man unintentionally caused honest Kestner many an unhappy hour. Kestner had been betrothed for four years. In 1768 he had secretly plighted his troth to the fifteen-year-old Charlotte Buff, daughter of the Steward of the Teutonic Order. That serious, solid Kestner engaged to marry such a very young girl is the best of evidence that his fiancée must have possessed uncommonly superior qualities. And such indeed was the case.

A blue-eyed blonde with a most agreeable expression, neat in figure, perfect in health, merry, with a shade of sauciness, positive and sure, burdened with no scholarly education, of fine feelings, but free from all maudlin sentimentality, energetic and fond of work—a refreshing sight. She had early become accustomed to a busy life. For Steward Buff was richly blessed with children. Of the sixteen born, eleven had lived, and so the second daughter, Lotte, stronger and clearer-headed than the oldest, Karoline, had her hands full with washing and dressing the little ones and filling their hungry mouths. Besides, their excellent mother had died more than a year before and the management of the large household had fallen upon Lotte. But as her duties multiplied, the strength and cheerfulness of her rare nature were correspondingly increased. Her appearance never betrayed the fact that she was burdened

with work or worry. From early morning till late at night she accomplished her daily work as if it were play. "It is well-nigh a miracle," remarked the astonished Kestner. True, there was not much time for the reading of books or idle entertainment. Her hands scarcely found time to rest when visitors came. Indeed the guests were not infrequently put to work, and Goethe often helped her pick fruit or was put to work with Kestner at cutting up beans.

Goethe became acquainted with this highly gifted girl at a little ball, which some young people from the Imperial Chamber had arranged for the third Whitsuntide holiday in Volpertshausen, an hour and a half from Wetzlar. Kestner, detained by official business, was unable to go out with the party. Consequently Lotte joined Goethe's partner—we do not know her name—and his cousin, Fräulein Lange, and it became Goethe's duty to call for them at the Deutschordenshof, or, as they said for short, Das Deutsche Haus. As he entered the house he found Lotte, as we may assume, in the position which he describes in *Werther:* "in ball costume and cutting bread for her little brothers and sisters." * Everything else, too,—the drive out, the ball, the return,—may have occurred, on the whole, as it is pictured in *Werther.* Only two important facts are changed. Goethe did not yet know that Lotte was betrothed to Kestner, and Kestner did not stay away from the ball, as the Albert of *Werther*, but came a few hours later.

This one meeting decided Goethe's love. "My genius was an evil genius," he writes shortly after his departure from Wetzlar, "when he drove me out to Volpertshausen. And yet a good genius. I could not wish to have spent my days in Wetzlar in any better way." It was natural that he should inquire after Lotte's health the next day, and that

* "Charlotte cutting bread and butter for the children—the scene of the ball—the children clinging round Werther for sugar, and pictures of that kind, betray so little inventive power that they have excited the ridicule of some English critics to whom poetry is a thing of pomp, not the beautiful vesture of reality. The beauty and art of *Werther* is not in the incidents, but in the representation. What is art but representation?"—Lewes, *Goethe*, i., 172.—C.

was the beginning of his intimate relations with the Deutsche Haus. Before long he became the favourite of all. "I know not what attraction it is that I must have for people, so many like me," he says on one occasion in *Werther*. And his mother wrote in this connection: "It is the happy fortune of Doctor Wolf,* that all the people with whom he is closely associated love him." His fondest friends were the children. But what would he not do to please them? He played and romped with them, let them crawl over him, told the dear little boys fairy tales or brought them something good and pretty. "The steward's children are naughty enough already; Goethe is spoiling them completely," complained the family physician. The honest old steward himself learned to love him as a son, and Lotte——?

A time of severe trial was approaching for Lotte. A man of uncommon beauty and fascinating qualities of heart and mind pays her the most affectionate homage; and beside him stands her fiancé, one of the most excellent men on God's earth, and yet without a spark of that divine glory which plays about her friend from Frankfort. In which direction will, indeed must, her heart's balance incline? one might ask. And yet—it may have been her innate fidelity, it may have been a vague suspicion that that divinely favoured youth was only a star, which one might behold with delight, but which one might not reach for without falling into the abyss—she remained firm and wavered not.

Kestner also conducted himself admirably. He was glad that Goethe was so pleased with his fiancée, and had perfect confidence in Lotte's fidelity and his friend Goethe's trustworthiness. And little as he was deceived in Lotte, just as little was he in Goethe. As soon as Goethe learned of their betrothal he was firmly determined that he would do nothing to disturb their peace. At the same time he, on his part, had confidence in Lotte, that she would not misunderstand his attentions. When, on one occasion, his

* Wolf, short for Wolfgang, was one of Goethe's common nicknames.

friend Born called his attention to the gossip of the town and added, "If I were Kestner, I should not like it. What can it lead to? I presume you will separate them?" and the like, Goethe said to him, "Well, I am fool enough to consider her an extraordinary girl; if she should deceive me, and prove to be a common flirt, and if she were to use Kestner as a screen for her manœuvres in order the more securely to lavish her charms, the moment I discovered it would be the last of our acquaintance." Nothing but these mutually pure and high sentiments made it possible for the three, who had gotten into such peculiar and delicate relations, to pass in happy harmony the beautiful months of spring and summer.

Goethe, not being burdened by official duties, was the most frequent guest at the Deutsche Haus. In the manifold duties of overseeing the fields and meadows, kitchen garden and flower garden he was Lotte's constant companion. If Kestner's business permitted he was also present. Meetings in her home alternated with excursions and walks into the environs. Thus one day resembled another and all seemed to be holidays. The whole calendar should have been printed in red. The more Goethe trusted himself and Lotte the more he gave the rein to his feelings and the more thoughtlessly he became involved in the toils of his growing fondness for her. His ever-busy fancy may have played a part in this. It unconsciously coloured things with its own rosy light. Thus in Dresden, when he was wholly devoted to Dutch art, his lodgings in the home of a cobbler had appeared to him as a painting by Ostade. Here in Wetzlar he was so full of Homer, that the maids at the well reminded him of the daughters of kings in the heroic age, and the haughty, ox-roasting wooers of Penelope were alive before him when he cooked his green peas in the inn kitchen at Garbenheim. I wonder whether, there in the Deutsche Haus with its gardens and fields, he did not also perceive the palace of Alcinous, and in Lotte the lovely Nausicaa? Thus passion may have heated fancy and fancy, in turn, passion. He sought to calm his heated blood

by poetic reproduction of what he experienced and saw. When it was not rhythmic poetry into which he poured the fulness of his heart, it was letters and even reviews for the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*. Hence the maiden that he painted with such inspiration in the review of the *Poems of a Polish Jew* was no other than Lotte.

The more his love for Lotte increased, the nearer came the possibility of a conflict, in spite of the innocence of all his purposes. "There were," Kestner relates, "many remarkable scenes, in which my regard for Lottchen was heightened and he became more precious to me as a friend; but I was often inwardly astonished that love can make such strange creatures even of the strongest and otherwise most independent minds. For the most part I pitied him; and had many an inward struggle, when I thought, on the one hand, I might not be in a position to make Lottchen as happy as he could make her, but, on the other hand, could not endure the thought of losing her." But the three pure hearts always found it easy to compromise any differences arising from Goethe's passionateness. Thus we learn, for example, from Kestner's diary, that once, about the middle of August, Goethe had given Lotte a kiss. Honest Lotte had reported it to her betrothed, and he was a little vexed; whereupon Lotte had undertaken to cool Goethe's passion. "On the fourteenth [August] in the evening," the diary continues, "Goethe returning from a walk came up to the house. He was treated indifferently and soon went away. On the fifteenth he was sent to Atzbach to take an apricot to the stewardess. At ten o'clock in the evening he came to see us and found us sitting out in front of the door; his flowers were indifferently left untouched; he felt it and threw them away; spoke in similes; I walked with Goethe through the streets till twelve o'clock; remarkable conversation, seeing that he was full of anger and had all sorts of imaginations, which we finally laughed at, leaning against a wall in the moonlight."

And it was well so; and certainly there would scarcely have been any further need of the lecture which Lotte

gave him the next day to induce him to guard himself more carefully. Two days later he had an engagement to meet Merck in Giessen, and as Lotte had also gone thither on a visit, his critical friend Merck became acquainted with her. He found Lotte, as he wrote his wife, worthy of the praise which Goethe had so enthusiastically lavished upon her in his letters, but he felt that it would be a good thing if his hot-blooded, fantastic Wolfgang were turned away from her. Accordingly on the next day, having met a queenly friend of Lotte's in Wetzlar he scolded him thoroughly for not having courted this Juno, especially as she was free and without wooers. He added, that Goethe failed to see what was best for him, and heartily disapproved of his special hobby of wasting time. Merck would have been glad to take Goethe home with him, and Goethe, too, would have been glad to go, but "what was the use of intending when he saw the faces around him?"

The twenty-eighth was Goethe's birthday as well as Kestner's. On the twenty-seventh Goethe sat with Lotte almost all day. In the evening they cut up beans till midnight, and the twenty-eighth was solemnly ushered in with tea and friendly faces. From Kestner Goethe received as a present the little Wettstein edition of Homer, that he might no longer need to carry the large Ernesti edition on his walks. Goethe tarried a fortnight longer, postponing his departure from one day to another. Finally the situation became dangerous, because of the passionate warmth which his relations with Lotte had assumed. It was his desire to avoid causing the lovers even the slightest trouble. So he decided to leave on the morning of September 11th. He told the betrothed couple nothing of his intentions, and so the last evening which he spent with them was doubly rich in reminiscences. By chance Lotte began to speak of the condition after life, of meeting and recognising one another in the beyond. This brought her to the death of her mother, and she herself and her hearers were deeply moved. Then she brought the conversation to an end and suggested that it was time to go home. Goethe, profoundly moved,

sprang up, kissed her hand, and exclaimed: "We shall see each other again, we shall recognise each other in whatever form we may be. I am ready to go, but if I were to say, 'for ever,' I should not be able to bear it. Farewell. We shall see each other again." "To-morrow, I think," replied Lotte jokingly, for she had recently, no doubt, often heard such solemn words of parting from the poet. With this they separated.

On reaching his room Goethe dashed off the following lines: "He is gone, Kestner, when you receive this note, he is gone. Give Lottchen the enclosed note. I was firmly composed, but your conversation has torn me asunder. At this moment I can say nothing to you but farewell. If I had tarried a moment longer with you I could not have restrained myself. Now I am alone, and to-morrow I shall leave. O my poor head!"

The note to Lotte ran: "I surely hope to return, but God only knows when. Lotte, how it moved my heart to listen to you, when I knew it was the last time I should see you! Not the last time, and yet I am going away to-morrow. What spirit led you to that conversation? It gave me occasion to say all that was in my heart. Ah, I was more intent upon this world down here below, upon your hand, which I kissed for the last time! The room, to which I shall never return, and your dear father, who saw me to the door for the last time! I am now alone and may weep. I leave you happy and shall always remain in your hearts. And shall see you again—but 'not to-morrow' means 'never.' Tell my boys: 'He is gone.' I cannot write any more."

The next morning he added a second letter to Lotte. "My luggage is packed, Lotte, and the day is breaking; another quarter of an hour and I am gone. The pictures which I forgot and which you will divide among the children may serve as an excuse for my writing, Lotte, as I have nothing to write. For you know all, know how happy I have been these days and I am going to the dearest, best people, but why away from you? But it is so, and it is my

fate that I cannot in reality add to to-day to-morrow and day after to-morrow, as I may often have done in jest. Be cheerful under all circumstances, dear Lotte; you are happier than a hundred others; but do not be indifferent, and I, dear Lotte, am happy that I read in your eyes that you believe I shall never change. Adieu, a thousand adieus!"

With that he was away from Wetzlar and from the Deutsche Haus, the scene of four months of happiness. How was his departure received there? Kestner entered in his diary:

"September 11, 1772.

"This morning Goethe went away without taking leave. He sent me a note with some books. He had long since said that about this time he should take a journey to Coblentz, where the military paymaster, Merck, expected him, and that he should not say good-bye but set off suddenly. So I had expected it. But that I was, notwithstanding, unprepared for it, I have felt deep in my soul. That morning I came home from the office. 'Herr Doctor Goethe sent this at ten o'clock.' I saw the books and also the note, and knew that it would say: 'He is gone,' and was quite dejected. Soon after Hans [Buff] came to ask me if he were really gone. Frau Lange had taken occasion to send word by a maid: 'It was very ill-mannered of Doctor Goethe to leave in this way without saying good-bye.' Lottchen sent back the reply: 'Why did you not teach your nephew better?' Lottchen, in order to be certain, sent a box which she had of Goethe's, to his house. He was no longer there. At noon Frau Lange had again sent word, that she was going to write Doctor Goethe's mother, how he had conducted himself. Every one of the children in the Deutsche Haus was saying: 'Doctor Goethe is gone!' At noon I talked with Herr von Born, who had accompanied him on horseback as far as Braunfels. Goethe had told him of our conversation last evening. Goethe had gone away in very low spirits. In the afternoon I brought Lotte the notes from Goethe. She was sorry about his de-

parture and while she was reading them the tears came into her eyes. Yet she was glad that he was gone, as she could not give him what he desired. We spoke only of him, neither could I think of anything else than him."

If later associations did not prove it, these simple lines would show how pure and cordial were the mutual relations of the three noble souls. Ten days later Kestner was in Frankfort. "At four o'clock I went to see Schlosser and lo! Goethe and Merck were there. It was an indescribable joy for me; he fell upon my neck and almost squeezed the life out of me. . . . We went out for a walk on the rampart, etc. We met a woman unexpectedly. When she saw Goethe, joy beamed from her countenance, she ran up to him suddenly and into his arms. They kissed each other cordially; it was the sister of Antoinette [Gerock]."

Vor dem Glücklichen her tritt Phöbus, der pythiſche Sieger,
Und der die Herzen bezwingt, Amor, der lächelnde Gott.*

While in the midst of his revelling in nature and love in Wetzlar, Goethe had been deeply pained that Herder had sent back *Götz* with a fault-finding critique. Everything was a mere product of the intellect, he said; furthermore, Shakespeare had completely ruined him. The disciple had gone too far in imitating his master to suit the great apostle of Shakespeare. Of what avail to the author was the approval of Merck and Salzmann by the side of this weighty judgment? But he was not in the least discouraged. "It must be melted," he answered Herder in July, "purified of dross, amalgamated with a more precious metal, and recast. Then it will be shown to you again." But for such a recasting there was in Wetzlar no time, no tranquillity, and when he left Wetzlar he became so fond of art through his study of painting that he discarded all literary work for the first months and devoted almost all his leisure hours to drawing, engraving, and etching; indeed on his long sojourn in Darmstadt he even infected Merck with his enthusiasm,

* Just in front of the man walks Phœbus, the Pythian victor,
And the subduer of hearts, Amor, the sweet smiling god.

saying that he would become a painter yet. "We advised him very strongly to do so," writes Karoline Flachsland in the naïve speech of the Darmstadt saints. But after his return to Frankfort in the middle of December, his irrepressible poetic instinct began to reassert itself. He took up *Götz* again, erased the crude, painful, and exaggerated features, limited the number of figures in his eloquence, made the expressions more pithy and archaic, looked after the motives more carefully, restrained for artistic reasons his favouritism for Adelheid, to whom he had given entirely too much influence in the dramatic development, sought to alleviate the fragmentary condition of the action, and in a few weeks the piece lay before him in its second and improved form. Even this he did not consider mature enough for publication, but only as a preparatory study, which he some day would make the basis of a further redaction to which he would devote more labour and thought. Fortunately just at this stage Merck came to Frankfort, at the beginning of February, 1773, and asked him what he meant by this everlasting filing and recasting. It only made a thing different and seldom better; one must see how what one has written affects the public, and then always take up something new. When Goethe objected that he feared the publishers might refuse the piece,—for how would they judge the work of an author unknown and presumptuous besides?—Merck overcame this objection, too, by offering to take part of the risk in the publication of the play. Goethe was to provide the paper, he would be responsible for the printing. Goethe very willingly accepted the offer, and in May the wild product was printed, in June published.

# XIV

## GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

Purpose in writing the play—Dramatised biography—Not intended for stage—Shakespeare the oracle—Longing for great men—A Weislingen-drama invented and interwoven with the Götz-drama—Weaknesses of the plot—Götz, Adelheid, Marie, Weislingen—The drama an atonement for Goethe's great wrong to Friederike—The humanistic spirit of Brother Martin—The drama a protest—Innovation in technique and language—Reception of the piece by contemporaries—Lessing's adverse criticism—The drama to-day: its great world, great art, great characters.

"MY son never dreamed," said Goethe's mother[42] in 1781 to Grossman, the actor, "of writing his *Götz* for the stage. He found some traces of this excellent man in a law book, sent to Nuremberg for Götz's autobiography, thought that it was dramatic in its original form, interwove a few episodes, and sent it out into the world." And Goethe himself, while at work on the first draught, wrote to Salzmann: "I am dramatising the history of one of the noblest Germans, am rescuing the memory of an honest man. . . . When it is done you shall have it, and I hope to give you no little pleasure, as I am resuscitating for you one of our noble ancestors such as, unfortunately, we know only from their tombstones."

With these words Goethe corroborates his mother's statements with regard to his main purpose. He desires to rescue the memory of an honest man and call back to life a noble ancestor for the benefit of his contemporaries. To this end he chooses the dramatic form—not with an eye to the stage, but because it appears to him the most effective way of endowing his hero with life. He expressed his true

purpose also in the title which he put on the manuscript of the first draught: *History of Gottfried von Berlichingen Dramatised.*

Strange youth, who wishes to give in the drama the biography of a brave man! Strange, but it was only a true symptom of a strange period.

Herder had preached that history was the essence of the Shakespearian drama, and put the main stress on the great event. "History," echoed the younger generation, and put the accent on the great man. To chisel him out of history and put him on the stage so that everybody would exclaim, "There is a fellow for you," seemed to the younger men to be the highest mission of the dramatist. "The mummy of an old hero which the biographer anoints and perfumes, and into which the poet breathes his spirit. Then he arises again, the noble departed, and in transfigured beauty comes forth from the books of history and lives with us again. Oh, how shall I find words to indicate this cordial feeling for the resurrected dead—and should we not gladly follow them to Alexandria, to Rome, through all the events of their lives, and ourselves be able to say: 'Blessed are the eyes that have seen thee'? Have you not a desire to look upon them, gentlemen, and see in even their smallest acts how they bear the rewards and buffets of fortune?" Thus exclaims Lenz in his remarks on the theatre—perhaps only echoing Goethe's effusions * in his peculiar way. And this longing for great men, always alive in the heart of youth, must have burned with great intensity in an age of pettiness and weakness. The more the present was lacking in great men, or at least such as the heart longed for, the more zealously they were dug up out of the graves of the past. Cæsar, Socrates, Faust, Götz, and soon Mahomet also occupied Goethe's mind. If Götz was the first to mature, not the least cause was the fact that in him were embodied the virtues which were uppermost in Goethe's affections in the years 1770 and 1771, because he saw in the world the greatest lack of these very

* *Cf.* Goethe's letter to Salzmann, quoted above.

virtues, viz.: bravery, independence, honesty, kindness, a straightforward, spirited, free, and noble life. Honest Götz with his iron hand was to draw the world out of the mire into which it had fallen. It is only by these political and artistic purposes that we can explain Goethe's temptation to dramatise the biography of Götz. For a less dramatic subject can scarcely be found; a chronological series of raids and campaigns, temporary leadership in the Peasants' War, and finally a long, peaceful old age in his ancestral castle. The really dramatic elements had to be entirely invented by Goethe. He did this by creating the characters of Weislingen and those associated with him, viz.: Adelheid, Marie, and Franz; that is to say, the poet welded upon the Götz-drama, or, better, upon the dialogued history of Götz, a Weislingen-drama. This Weislingen-drama is to such an extent the prime motive of the action that the question has been justly raised, whether the drama might not be more fittingly called Adalbert von Weislingen.

Everything concerning Götz is treated epically, an epical biography, as it were. This deprives the Götz-drama of a centralised operating cause, such as is essential even in an epic. Its unity, on the other hand, is based solely upon the personality of the hero. The drama proceeds with a chain of adventures until the chain finds its necessary end in the death of Götz. If it did not occur to him in the second act to cool his wrath on the Nuremberg merchants returning home from the Frankfort fair, and if it did not come into the minds of the peasants in the fifth act to press him into service as their leader, the drama would come to an untimely death in the middle of the second or at the end of the fourth act. And yet Goethe could easily have produced a more coherent plot if, in the second act, he had made Weislingen's treachery the chief motive. Götz could have declared, indeed would have been compelled to declare, a new feud against the Bishop of Bamberg in order to punish the traitor and his protector. But here we can see how little Goethe thought of a drama as a stage piece and how much he was bent on merely depicting in dialogue the life

of his hero in its most characteristic moments. In the biography the feud with Bamberg is followed by that with Nuremberg, and this by the execution of the imperial ban and the imprisonment in Heilbronn; and in this order Goethe dramatised the material.

But if political and artistic tendencies kept the poet too close to history, his dramatic instinct held the more complete sway in the creation and elaboration of the Weislingen-drama, which in the first version threatened to submerge the history of Götz. The Weislingen-drama, however, does not owe its existence merely to the effort to breathe dramatic life into the dialogued biography. In the history of Götz Goethe had paid tribute to the esthetic, political, and social ideals of youth. Here was portrayed "a fellow," who, heeding only the voice of his genius, declared war upon the absurd laws of men and their still more absurd doings, who fought for the good and the true, freedom and nature, even if he himself had to fall beneath the iron tread of history. But something further within the poet was struggling for poetic realisation. As life without the ingredient of love, or without lovable women, seemed to him dull and empty, so also literature. Hence the manly story of Götz had to be interwoven with the Weislingen-drama, which may be called a hymn to the power of woman's charms. Every man who comes within the sphere of Adelheid's radiant beauty and seductive charms[43] succumbs: Weislingen, the veteran love-maker; Franz, the boy; Liebetraut, the fool; Karl, the crown prince; nay, in the first version, even honest Sickingen, as well as the gypsy boy, and the bailiff of the vehmic court. The uncanny charms of the beautiful woman drive men and boys, whose hearts are not naturally depraved, to treachery and murder, as if they had no wills of their own.

Another purely invented female character of the Weislingen-drama is Marie, sister of Götz, a most noble contrast to Adelheid. The latter a widow, domineering, coquettish, with an inordinate longing for love and power; the former a maiden, pure, unselfish, angelic, who extends her hand to

a man who has deserted her, in order to lighten the burden of his guilty soul. "May God forget all you have done, as I forget all." We know who was the poet's model for Marie. And that brings us to the motive which perhaps gave the decisive impulse to write the Weislingen-drama. "She wrote me a letter that lacerated my heart," says the poet of Friederike. This must have been in the autumn of 1771, just at the time when he first took up *Götz*. His soul was burning with the consciousness of a great wrong. The attempt to atone for it was partly responsible for the existence of the Weislingen-drama, and thus of the whole drama. For the elements of *Götz* had been in embryo in his mind for a considerable time, but the first possibility of forming them into a living whole came when they were brought into connection with the figure of Weislingen. "Poor Friederike will feel to some extent consoled when the faithless man is poisoned." Thus wrote Goethe to Salzmann, when he sent him a copy of *Götz* for Friederike.

It was not in Goethe, who was the child of his age and had a clear eye for the past, to fail to incorporate the motive of the Reformation in his piece, although Götz himself had nothing to do with the Reformation. Brother Martin [44] is the representative of this motive. For the development of the plot he is wholly unnecessary, and for that very reason his presence is significant. Furthermore, it is extraordinarily characteristic of the poet, that he brought neither the religious nor the ecclesiastical side of the Reformation into the foreground: not the war against the papacy, nor the restoration of the Bible, nor the universal priesthood, but the humanistic side: the free, full humanity. "Nothing seems to me more burdensome than not to be permitted to be a man," says Brother Martin, at the beginning of his complaint against the monastic vows. That was also the most essential point in common between the Storm-and-Stress period and the sixteenth century.

If we consider these motives, drawn from the inner and the outer world, which swelled Goethe's heart till it almost burst, we can understand how working on the play became

a passion with him and made him "forget sun, moon, and the dear stars."

Nevertheless it was not the material alone which made this composition a labour of love with him. The play was at the same time to mark the beginning of a new era, embodying, as it did, the form of the new theories of art. Since these taught that it was the task of the serious drama to bring before our eyes a great man through all the trials of fortune in his life, and since the observance of the traditional rules of the unity of time, place, and action was an obstacle in the way of this task, they were ruthlessly thrust aside. This brought the poet at the same time nearer to truth and nature, the great fundamental thoughts of the Storm-and-Stress movement. We can see the true delight which he took in dealing the old technique of the theatre a powerful blow. He hurries us through a space of many years, whirls us back and forth between Bamberg, Augsburg, Heilbronn, the Spessart [Mountains], and Jaxthausen, and gives us, instead of a single, comprehensive action, a multitude of dramatised events. What did he care, whether or not such a piece could be performed! If not, so much the worse for the theatre. As in the plot, he paid no attention to the traditional laws of dramatic art, or to the requirements of the stage, having regard only to the simple truth (the historical progress of events), so also in the language. The *dramatis personæ* should speak their true and genuine dialect, not an artificial literary German. Hence Goethe with unheard-of boldness cast the sacred literary language overboard, and in syntax, vocabulary, and inflections sought to reproduce the natural language of the characters. If any one cares to measure the advance over former plays, let him compare the opening of *Minna von Barnhelm* with that of *Götz*. In both cases the scene is an inn, and Lessing evidently tries to strike a realistic tone. And yet how entirely different is the language of Just and the landlord from that of the mounted soldiers, the peasants, and the landlord in *Götz!* The former the correct universal literary German, the latter a free, homely, dialectic, archaic, collo-

quial German. And we must not forget that the former is in a comedy and the latter in a great historical tragedy.

Thus the whole of *Götz*, its hero, its ideas, its technique, and its language, was a declaration of war against the old and the traditional, against limitations and inferiority. Fully conscious of this revolutionary character, Goethe wrote to Merck [45] a note accompanying a copy of the play:

Allen Perückeurs und Fratzen
Und allen literariſchen Katzen

. . . . .

Weiſen wir ſo dieſen Philiſtern,
Kritikaſtern und ihren Geſchwiſtern
Wohl ein jeder aus ſeinem Haus—*

ending with a line closely resembling Götz's vulgar challenge to the imperial herald.

But Goethe's defiance to the enemy was unnecessary. The poetic beauties of his drama were so extraordinary that hardly any marked objections were heard. The greatest furore, as was to be expected, came from the applause of the younger men, to whom the anonymous play was not merely a splendid composition but a stroke for liberty as well. Bürger under the first impression wrote to Boie: "Boie! Boie! The Knight with the Iron Hand, what a play! I can scarcely contain myself for enthusiasm. How shall I thank the author for my delight? Why, he deserves the name of the German Shakespeare. . . . What a thoroughly German subject! What daring treatment! Noble and free as his hero, the author tramples the miserable code of rules under his feet and conjures up before our eyes an entire epoch with life and breath in its minutest veins. . . . May fortune smile upon the noble, free man, who was more obedient to nature than to tyrannical

* To every peruke and caricature,
And mousing critic of literature,

. . . . .

To these Philistines thus we can,
Criticasters and all their clan,
Each of us from his window show—

art. . . . O Boie, do you not know who he is? Tell me, tell me, that my reverence may erect an altar to him."

As Bürger of the North, so also Schubart of the South was enthusiastic over the piece. Herder, notwithstanding his harsh and unfriendly letter to Goethe, was full of admiration even for the first draught. "When you read it," he wrote to his fiancée in July, 1772, "you too will experience a few hours of heavenly joy. There is an uncommon amount of German power, depth, and truth in it," and in his pamphlet, *Von Deutscher Art und Kunst*, he pointed in suggestive and eloquent terms to Goethe as the German Shakespeare. But even those who were offended by the irregularities in the play, were nevertheless fully appreciative of its merits. "Let form be form," was the criticism in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen;* "even if the author had written in Chinese form, we should have to prize his genius. Rather twenty times as many oddities as occur in this play than the insipid twaddle which one has to swallow in the German plays of to-day. . . ." Christian Heinrich Schmid, small mind as he was, remarked in the *Deutsche Merkur:* "A play, in which all three unities are most cruelly mistreated, which is neither comedy nor tragedy, and yet the most beautiful, most interesting monstrosity, for which we would gladly exchange a hundred of our lachrymose comedies. . . . We had read the play several times and thought we could reason calmly about our delight, but, before we were aware, we were again in the midst of an intoxication of feeling, and all rules, even the determination to criticise, vanished like shadows before this vigorous language of the heart." Wieland, too, not in the least blind to the weaknesses of the play, and in spite of his anger over an attack by Goethe, praised it and, as editor of the *Merkur*, defended it against some unfounded fault-finding of his collaborator, Schmid.

The public found its greatest pleasure, Goethe tells us in *Wilhelm Meister*, in the subject-matter: in the armoured knights, the old castles, the sincerity, integrity, and honesty, but especially in the independence of the characters:

"Everybody was kindled with the fire of most noble patriotism. How much it pleased German society and appealed to their native instinct to find poetic enjoyment in their own home country! Especially the vaulted rooms and cellars, the ruined castles, the moss and hollow trees, above all, however, the nocturnal gypsy scenes and the vehmic court were incredibly effective." In spite of all difficulties *Götz* was performed [46] in Berlin as early as April, 1774, and miserable as was the *mise en scène*, the play received stormy applause.

The two greatest contemporaries of the poet, Lessing and Frederick II., were indifferent, even hostile to the new play. We must not be surprised at this attitude of the Prussian king. He was so lost in French taste that he could not but judge of *Götz* as Voltaire had once of *Hamlet:* "Voilà un Götz de Berlichingen qui paraît sur la scène. Imitation détestable de ces mauvaises pièces anglaises et le Parterre applaudit et demande avec enthousiasme la répétition de ces dégoûtantes platitudes."

But Lessing? He had overthrown French influence in Germany and had been the herald of Shakespeare, and now that a German Shakespeare seemed to arise—so cold? Had he no eye for that which all the world saw, no feeling for that which warmed the hearts of all? Beyond all doubt, he had. Otherwise he could not have been Lessing. But in him, the reformer of German dramatic art, all joy was of necessity stifled by the bitter fear that what he had laboriously rescued from ruin and ossification might in turn be destroyed by the unrestrained licence of the Storm-and-Stress movement. The more dazzling the example, the more dangerous it was. And hence he directed the full power of his wrath against the "beautiful monstrosity," and had no slight inclination to attack Goethe, in spite of his boasted genius. And he would have hit the weak spots with sharp arrows. A single aphorism, satirical as an epigram, will afford us an indication of what he might have written: "He fills intestines with sand and sells them for ropes. Who? The poet, perchance, who puts the life

history of a man into a dialogue and hawks the thing for a drama?" But that Lessing, despite all this, remained silent proves that he was unconsciously under the spell of the genius of his young rival.

After calm consideration he may have had the same hopes of the highly gifted poet as Wieland prophetically expressed in the *Merkur*, that perhaps there would come a time when after deeper study into the nature of the human soul he would be brought to the conviction that Aristotle was right after all,—that his rules were based on laws of nature more than on caprice, convenience, and example.

If we to-day, far away from the din of party strife, approach the play, neither dazzled by its tendencies nor terrified by the unrestrained licence of its technique, we cannot but join in the applause of the great majority, whether we try it by the historical or by the absolute standard—standards which, however, are inapplicable to *Götz* as to the most of Goethe's works.

What German drama—even the masterpieces of Lessing not excepted—could at that time compare with *Götz* in richness, brilliancy, and warmth? To be sure, *Minna von Barnhelm* and *Emilia Galotti* are, from the point of view of formal art, incomparably greater masterpieces; but by the side of *Götz* they are but vigorous and clever drawings compared with a mural painting revelling in rich colour and brimming over with the sap of life.

What a varied crowd of people the poet gathers about us! The imperial knights, the bishops, the lansquenets, the city aldermen, the merchants, the emperor, monks, jurists, peasants, gypsies, members of the vehmic court, men, women, boys, children. And how they stand out before us! Who ever drew such men, knights, bishops, women, and boys before? The iron-handed Götz, the man of fidelity, bravery, kindness, and love of liberty, the hero with the soul of a child; and his opposite, weak Weislingen, to whom liberty is nothing and enjoyment everything, and who allows himself to be hauled about through life by the favour of princes and women. And again their young

doubles: Georg, the fine, healthy servant of Götz, the golden boy, who cannot await the day when he shall ride forth in coat of mail upon his own horse; and Franz, Weislingen's page, unstable, indulging in sensual intoxications, who cannot await the day when his beautiful lady-love shall listen to his love's desire; and, further, Olearius, doctor of canonical and civil law, vainglorious in spite of the limits of his knowledge, servile flatterer of the great; the Bishop of Bamberg, surrounded by women and court fools, devoted wholly to the common selfishness of princes and the common intrigues of tyrants; the drunken, stammering, staring Abbot of Fulda ; and, contrasted with these, wise, noble Brother Martin, who hates the idleness of monks and is happy that he has seen a man like Götz; the honest, prosy emperor, who in the midst of the turmoil of affairs feels very clearly where his true friends stand. And beside this gallery of men the portraits of women: the firm, composed, efficient housewife Elizabeth; good, gentle, tender, Marie, and the iridescent serpent, the bewitching she-devil Adelheid. Wieland said of them, that the greatest master of character-painting, Shakespeare himself, was nowhere greater than our poet in his portraits of Marie, Elizabeth, and Adelheid.

The poet animates events with no less art than he does people. Even such complex situations as the siege of Jaxthausen and the fight with the imperial troops he brings before our eyes with the greatest clearness. And with what simple means he accomplishes it!—a series of fleeting scenes, a few casual words, an exclamation, a hasty conversation to transport us into the midst of the action.

The same compact, effective art is seen in the portrayal of momentous soul struggles. Two examples may illustrate this. Weislingen takes leave of Adelheid in order not to break his word to Götz and Marie. Adelheid's arts of persuasion and seduction have been fruitless. She looks at him angrily.

"*Weislingen:* Do not look at me so.

"*Adelheid:* Will you be our enemy and yet expect us to smile on you? Go!

"*Weislingen:* Adelheid!

"*Adelheid:* I hate you.

"*Franz:* My gracious lord, the bishop wishes to speak with you.

"*Adelheid:* Go! Go!

"*Franz:* He begs you to hasten.

"*Adelheid:* Go! Go!

"*Weislingen:* I will not say good-bye, I shall see you again."

Another example. Weislingen has been poisoned by Franz. Franz comes to him and sees him in his misery. He utters not a word, but, crushed by a sense of guilt, falls at the feet of his lord.

"*Weislingen:* Franz, arise and cease weeping. I may get up again. While there is life there is hope.

"*Franz:* You never will. You must die.

"*Weislingen:* I must?

"*Franz:* Poison! Poison! From your wife. I! I!"

He runs away and throws himself into the Main. When have the deepest soul struggles been portrayed more laconically; when more effectively?

And what a gamut of feelings the poet carries us through! Verily, the critic in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen* was right when he wrote: "From the moment of the siege of Götz's castle your heart will warm to him; you will tremble for him in the tower, among the peasants and the gypsy rabble, you will shed tears over the sun that refreshes him in his dying hour, and you will re-echo his cry of 'Freedom! freedom!'" But he ought not to have failed to say that our heart is warm from the moment when Götz appears and Georg begs to be taken along to the fight. For it was another tremendous superiority of the play, that it was flooded with a stream of warm blood, such as only the glowing heart of our poet could pour into it.

If we add to all this the great historical background which Goethe has drawn with such wonderful distinctness

and fidelity, we willingly agree with those of his contemporary critics who said, "The drama as a play for the stage is a failure, but it is a poem of immortal beauty."

Hence we can only regret that Goethe, thirty years after, made the attempt to correct the mistakes in composition in order to fit it for the stage. In doing so he marred the brilliant youthful beauty of the work, while the stage gained only a piece, adapted to its ordinary routine, but no less lacking in internal unity than the dialogued history had been.

# XV

## WERTHER

1773 a quiet year—Goethe's nearest friends scatter—Cultivation of his inner life—Lotte-cult—Death of Jerusalem—The Werther mood—Thoughts of suicide—Remedy sought in literary reproduction—Form chosen—Subjective elements wanting for second part furnished by intercourse with Maxe La Roche—Method of writing—Analysis of the plot—The catastrophe the natural outgrowth of Werther's character—Twofold motive of suicide—Simplicity of plot—Wealth of scenes and characters—Style—Success of the novel—Lessing's adverse criticism—Werther craze—Goethe's world-fame.

THE year 1773 was for Goethe a very quiet one. He was more than ever dependent upon himself. In October of the preceding year Cornelia, the most zealous and sympathetic companion of his life and ambition, had been betrothed to his friend, Johann Georg Schlosser, and this had turned her interest in another direction. On the 14th of November of this year she left Frankfort to go with her husband, first to Karlsruhe, then to Emmendingen in Baden, where he had found a position as district judge. The dear circle of Darmstadt saints was also broken. Good Uranie died in April. Goethe's enthusiastic bearing caused the world to suspect more intimate relations between him and Uranie than in reality existed. He suffers a martyrdom of pain that he is forbidden to erect a monument to the memory of his dearly beloved friend because he does not care to confront the nonsensical gossip of the world. Soon after, early in May, Herder came for his bride, Karoline Flachsland. The wedding was celebrated merrily. Nevertheless, for some not

very clear reason, Goethe and Herder came into such strained relations, that all intercourse between them ceased for a long time. A few days after Herder's wedding, Merck, as a member of the suite of Landgravine Karoline, started on a journey to St. Petersburg, which kept him away from home for the remainder of the year, while his wife went to her relatives in Switzerland. And, finally, about the same time Kestner and Lotte were still farther removed from our poet upon taking up their residence in Hanover. Such of Goethe's friends as were left in Frankfort, the elder Schlosser, Horn, Riese, Krespel and his sister, the three Gerocks, the two Münches, and others, meant no more to him than a slight enhancement of his social pleasures. Of most value to him still was his motherly friend, Fräulein von Klettenberg, who, in spite of his backsliding—not, to be sure, into infidelity, but into a lack of positive Christian belief—still loved him cordially, because from his profound tolerance and his sympathetic appreciation of the true orthodox position she was led to hope that he would yet find God in Christ. Helpful as an exchange of opinions with this charitable and clever friend may at times have been, her heaven-centred soul was an inadequate sounding-board for his thousand passionate emotions, longings, and activities.

But the more keenly Goethe felt that the circle of his dearest friends was growing narrow and unresponsive, the more he built up his own inner life. As he covered the walls of his room with Raphael's heads and filled it with Greek busts so he peopled his imagination with a gallery of demigods, heroes, and angels, from Prometheus, Cæsar, Mahomet, and Faust, to Lotte, and in silent intercourse with their spirits was able to satisfy the manifold needs of his heart.

The angel Lotte justly triumphed over the demigods and heroes. For the fascination which she had exerted over him had not ceased with his departure from Wetzlar, —in fact, it had not even moderated. The refreshing picture of her maidenly charms remained ever before his eyes.

He was drawn toward her by an almost uncontrollable longing. "When I come to the Friedberg Gate, it seems to me as if I should have to come to you," he exclaims six weeks after his departure from Wetzlar. And when, in November, his brother-in-law goes to Wetzlar on business, he wanders back the perilous path and remains there three days. On the last evening he still had detestable thoughts of suicide. "It was time that I went," he said in a letter to Kestner. In Frankfort he seeks to compensate himself for the loss of the real Lotte by her silhouette, which he has fastened to the wall of his room. "I just said good-night to Lotte's silhouette" (September 25, 1772). "Before I went to dinner to-day I greeted her picture cordially" (October 8th). "Yesterday evening, dear Kestner, I conversed with Lotte and you for an hour in the twilight. . . . I was feeling my way to the door . . . my hand touched paper . . . it was Lotte's silhouette. . . . I assure you, it was a pleasant sensation, I gave her a most hearty greeting and went on" (December 15th). "Before going to bed I feel like bidding you good-night, and sweet Lotte, too, to whom I have already said good-morning and good-evening a great many times to-day" (January 11, 1773). After Palm Sunday, April 14, 1773, the day of Lotte's wedding, he intends to bury her silhouette. But it still hangs there on the wall and "shall hang there till I die." On the 10th of April he writes: "I cannot yet understand how it was possible for me to go away from Lotte." He asks her to send him her bridal bouquet, and wears it on a walk to Darmstadt. And so it goes on; and it makes but little difference that Lotte is the wife of another and blessed with a child. "For I still see her as I left her." As late as August, 1774, we hear an outburst of passionate adoration, called forth by the visit of Lotte's childhood nurse. "You can imagine how much the woman was to me and that I shall care for her. If bones of saints and lifeless rags which have touched their bodies deserve adoration and careful preservation, why not the human creature who touched you, carried you as a child in her

arms, led you by the hand, the creature of whom you perchance asked many a favour?" Not until the publication of the poetic reflection of his relation to Lotte does the fantastic cult lose its charm for him.

That *Werther* is this poetic reflection is well known. The novel had grown slowly through a gradual process of enlargement and transformation. Immediately after his departure from Wetzlar Goethe may have felt the strongest impulse to give his experiences artistic reproduction in literary form. But to bring the beautiful summer dream to as innocent and heroic an end as was the reality, could not satisfy either the poet or the man. His emotional life was too violently agitated to be contained in the delicate frame of an idyll. Then at the beginning of November he learns of the death of Legation Secretary Jerusalem, whose deep but bitter nature had been driven to suicide, partly by his hopeless love of another's wife, and partly by the slights of society. At this moment the poet sees his new work in outline. Great motives quickly crystallise about the Wetzlar nucleus. The chief motive becomes similar to that in *Götz:* the conflict between the requirements of the individual and the demands of the world, between desire and reality.

Goethe was always in the midst of this struggle. His indomitable spirit of liberty saw itself everywhere fenced in by institutions of state, church, and society, or curbed by the will of others. The quiet, dulness, and insignificance of public life were painfully out of proportion to the energy, haste, and greatness which he longed for. There seemed to be no other prospect opening up for all the powers of which he was conscious except uselessly to drag out his life in this spiritless humdrum. A petty office in the service of his native city seemed to be the lazy pillow upon which the Titan was to fall asleep. Living death! And even in the fields where he was granted full freedom of invention his talents were not in harmony with his ambitions.

He had a great fondness for the fine arts, but his performances were those of a beginner, and who could assure

him that diligence and growing insight would ever make anything more of him?

The applause with which the great public had greeted *Götz* might well have given him more assurance of the value of his literary achievements. But while the roar of this applause was still in his ears he began to see dangerous tendencies in the play which he must avoid. And what was the applauding public to him? "A herd of swine," as he expressed himself in the vigorous language of the Storm-and-Stress period. The public had hardly the faintest conception of the best things that he had offered. Even the most capable of his immediate associates were so far away from him in sympathy that he occasionally felt himself in that appalling solitude of which the greatest spirits have ever at times, or, in some cases, permanently been conscious. When, in 1773, this lonesomeness became more intense, shrill cries of pain disclosed his agony. "My poor life is turning into a cold, barren rock." "I am wandering in deserts where there is no water; my hair is the only shade and my blood the only fountain."

And was it not to be expected that despair should at times lay hold of him? Those he loved he could neither possess nor enjoy without restraint or guilt. In fact, he trespassed if he even showed his love; his very existence brought unhappiness and, all unknown to him, cast a blight on tender souls.

And what were the conditions in his home and in the wider circle of his friends? An excellent father, but painfully out of harmony with wife and children; a sister, betrothed to a noble man of fine education, yet with uncertain prospects of true happiness. In other families, moreover, he had from early youth seen misfortune, crime, discord, hatefulness of every description; and in political circles narrowness, selfishness, bribery, and cowardice.

To crown all this he had a rankling realisation of the fragmentary nature of his own knowledge. He, with the profound mind that wished to penetrate to the heart of

things, was ever being reminded anew of the narrow limitations of human understanding.

Conceive now these oppressive, agitating, torturing thoughts and feelings, experiences and observations at work upon a most delicately organised soul, a prey to violent passions, and sympathising with all mankind. No wonder that life seemed a burden and the world a prison! Hence it is we find this highly favoured man in the best years of his youth entertaining thoughts of suicide.* "I, too, honour such a deed," he writes October 10, 1772, on receipt of the false news of von Goué's suicide. In Wetzlar, on the 9th of November, he had "very suicidal thoughts." "A noble heart, a keen mind," he says to Sophie La Roche, at the end of November, with reference to Jerusalem's death, "how easily they pass from extraordinary feelings to such determinations, and life—what need have I to speak to you of that!" "I do this because it will seem for the next few days as if you had in me a lazy teacher. For I am in a state of perturbation, in which they say it is not profitable to leave the world" (to Johanna Fahlmer, March, 1773). "If one's genius did not convert stones and trees into children, one would not care to live" (to Röderer, autumn of 1773). "If I still live, I owe it to you," he writes, November 21, 1774, to Kestner, with reference to events in Wetzlar. In Goué's drama, *Masuren*, in which the members of the Wetzlar Round Table are copied, is found this conversation:

"*Fayel* [Gotter]: I see that suicide could also find a place in your system.

"*Götz* [Goethe]: And what have you to offer in objection to it, pray? Your commonplaces?

"*Fayel:* Götz, you are joking; you will not kill yourself.

"*Götz:* Only in case I were cold-blooded enough to thrust a dagger into my heart."

This agrees with Goethe's statement in his autobiography that in his Werther period he kept a well-sharpened dagger

* The glorification of death in *Prometheus*, written in 1773, is also indicative of this frame of mind.

lying beside his bed and tried repeatedly to sink the sharp point of it a few inches into his breast; and with what he writes to Zelter in 1812: "I know right well what determination and effort it cost me at that time to escape from the waves of death." Of course all these waves of melancholy were only sporadic and lasted but a few moments. They were only dark veins running through the white marble of his soul, not rampant weeds which fasten their roots in the smallest crevices and gradually overrun the marble and crumble it to pieces. But from fear that these momentary fits of despondency might become more permanent and perilous he felt the greatest need of curing himself of them; and, as always, a literary creation seemed to him the best remedy.

Jerusalem's death furnished him the desired plot. But he was still undecided as to the form of the work. At first he favoured the drama, but as this seemed impracticable he hit upon the epistolary novel, which had been made so popular by Richardson and Rousseau, and which had some dramatic features. The work proceeded but slowly, for he still lacked the subjective elements for the second part. But soon a painful experience gave him these. Immediately after his departure from Wetzlar Goethe had become a close friend of the La Roche family in Ehrenbreitstein. He had visited them for several days and become very fond of Frau von La Roche, and in her oldest daughter, Maximiliane, an uncommonly beautiful girl, he felt a growing interest. In 1774 Maxe, as she was called by her intimate friends, was married to a rich widower, Peter Anton Brentano, a merchant in Frankfort, already the father of five children. And now the beautiful young wife, who had sprung from one of the most cheerful belletristic circles in one of the most lovely spots of Germany, sat by the side of an ugly, dry, wooden husband, in a gloomy mercantile house, where one had to make his way among oil barrels and herring casks. Under such conditions it was a consolation for her when Goethe came and, as Merck maliciously remarked, compensated her for the odour of oil and cheese,

entertained her step-children, and accompanied her piano with his cello. But Herr Brentano put a false interpretation on the friendship. A violent conflict ensued—perhaps more between Brentano and his wife than between him and the poet—"terrible moments," which brought Goethe to the determination not to enter the house for a long time.

This incident, which occurred a few weeks after Maxe's wedding, gave the impulse to complete *Werther*. Goethe had found the mood and the colouring for the second part of the novel. He took up the work at once and, shutting himself off from all intercourse, finished it within four weeks. In the autumn it appeared in print. What Goethe elaborated in February, 1774, cannot have been much more than the second part of the novel. The first part, after he had decided to make use of the epistolary form, was already almost complete in his diaries, and his letters from Wetzlar to Merck and his sister. For that he reproduces these letters, artistically recast, often, in fact, with their original dates, can scarcely be doubted. But it was not easy for him, with his constant striving after the greatest possible truth, to construct the letters of the second part. His manner of approaching the task is most characteristic of his method of work and the peculiar imaginative life which he led. He would summon before him in the spirit, so he tells us, some one of his acquaintance, beg him to be seated, walk back and forth in front of him, stand before him, and discuss with him the subject which at that moment was uppermost in his mind. He says that perhaps the letters in *Werther* had such manifold charms because their various contents had first been discussed with several individuals in such imaginary dialogues, while in the composition itself they seemed to be directed only to a friend and sympathiser. Thus the poet succeeded in giving to the work a richly coloured and at the same time a uniform style.

Let us consider this book more narrowly, the most peculiar and magnificent product of the Storm-and-Stress period. The hero is a highly gifted young man, of about

Goethe's intellectual constitution, but somewhat more sensitive and gentle, and considerably weaker. His weakness is not weakness in proportion to the moral strength of other men, but solely in proportion to the tremendous power of his passions; for there is nothing more stormy or impassioned than this man's heart. The vehemence of his emotions, painful as well as joyful, rises high above the commonplace. His passions are never far from insanity. Like a dreamer he wanders about in the world and it seems to him dark or rosy, according to his own frame of mind. He hates everything regular or moderate. He delights in freedom from restraint, Storm and Stress, and in ranting. For this reason he is an enemy of regular civic professions. To him they are despicable occupations, which can satisfy only small and vain spirits. But whoever is endowed with depth of observation and feeling sees and feels the discouraging difference between his own smallness and the greatness of the universe, the yawning chasm between "will" and "can," "will" and "may," between "imagine" and "know," between "desire" and "possession."

We are early filled with anxiety for the future of this high-strung man, who is now in tears of joy, now in tears of pain. What will be the issue of his struggle with the harsh realities of life? His leisure, giving him opportunity to observe and dissect his inmost feelings, increases the danger which threatens him.

To be sure, he is happy as yet. In the beautiful month of May he has come to a strange place. With full delight he revels in blooming nature, in Homer, who, like a cradle-song, lulls his excited blood to rest, and in association with the common people and the children of the poor, who refresh his heart. For with them is truth, simplicity, incorruptness. As yet his soul is as merry as a spring morning, and whenever the dark clouds of the world-woe roll over him he half-smilingly consoles himself with the sweet feeling that he can leave this earthly prison whenever he will. Things go on thus from the beginning of May till the middle of June. Then at a ball he becomes acquainted with Lotte,

the daughter of Steward S., and his whole being plunges into an absorbing passion for her. His heart exults. It does not worry him that Lotte is already engaged; Albert, her betrothed, is away and hence does not exist in the consciousness of the new lover. A welcome guest in the steward's family, he does not let a day pass without calling there. Lotte becomes to him, as it were, a saint. He sees her reflection in everybody who has approached her. He would like to kiss a boy who has just seen her. At the end of July Albert arrives. Werther awakes from his dream-life and decides to leave. But Albert is a dear, good fellow and not jealous,—rejoices, on the contrary, that Werther is fond of his fiancée, and so Werther, with a thousand sophistries silences his friend Wilhelm, who urges him to leave the place, and remains. But his temper grows worse, his nature wilder, more distracted. As before, he wanders about a great deal in the open air, but nature is no longer a pleasure to him. Heretofore the scene of a boundless life, she has changed into the abyss of an ever-open grave. He recognises the hopelessness of his situation and yet has not the strength to do anything but shed tears over the dark future. He begins to discuss suicide. "I can see no end to all this misery but the grave," he writes to Wilhelm on the 30th of August. Wilhelm spurs him on again to leave. Finally he musters up his courage and on the 11th of September he flees from the volcanic field that is covered over with so many charms. This is the end of the first part.

In the beginning of the second part—it is the 20th of October—we see Werther in an office. He has been made an attaché to an embassy. He is tolerably well. Separation from Lotte and regular work have calmed his overwrought feelings. But there is no lack of vexations to excite again his sensitive nerves. The ambassador is a pedant, "a punctilious fool and as fussy as an old maid," finds fault with Werther's free style and requires him to apply the file to his sentences. A legal pedant, he has no use for *beaux-esprits*, and emphasises the contrast between

himself and Werther in unamiable ways. Furthermore, the pride and stupidity of society, the petty distinctions of rank, the haughtiness of the nobility, offend Werther, and he begins to regret that he has allowed himself to submit to the yoke. Thus the year comes to an end. In February of the following year he learns of the marriage of Albert and Lotte. He writes Albert a cordial, sensible letter; he only wishes to keep the second place in Lotte's heart. Again we have hopes for him.

Then in the middle of March there occurs a vexatious incident which insults his pride and brings the discomfort of his position to a crisis. He is invited to dine with Count von C., a great friend of his. In the evening the nobility arrives; Werther forgets that he is not one of them and remains in the drawing-room with Fräulein von B., the most congenial of his acquaintances, until the count with apologies calls his attention to the miserable etiquette which demands his withdrawal. The little incident is circulated with exaggerations, his acquaintances ask him about it, Fräulein von B. is scolded by her aunt for associating with Werther—enough to inflame Werther's bitter wrath and drive him to the determination to withdraw from this circle. He hands in his resignation and in the beginning of May accepts an invitation to visit a certain prince. But gracious as the prince is, he has a mediocre mind and in his society Werther is soon dying of ennui. He now forms the plan of going to war, as Goethe makes Fernando, Hermann, and Eduard do in later works. The prince discourages him, and "it would have had to be more a passion with me than a whim, for me not to have been willing to give ear to his reasons." He remains till the end of June. Then, aimlessly following the dictation of his heart, he returns to Lotte. He is given a friendly welcome by her and Albert. But he finds everything, everything so changed. No trace of the former world, no tingling of his former feelings. His eyes are dry and his brow contracted with care. He sees in nature a lacquered picture and in himself a dried-up spring. Even cheerful Homer no longer

refreshes him; he prefers to lose himself in the dreadful loneliness of Ossian's mystic world. And Albert and Lotte? Are they happy? Albert has become duller and quieter, and the burden of business has made him more morose. Lotte does not feel with him that soul-sympathy which she finds with Werther. But she is a true, faithful wife and scarcely betrays her inner feelings by the slightest symptom. But Werther, with the keen sense of a genius and a lover, feels the slightest trace of sympathy and on that account is the less able to part from her. Furthermore, he is completely at sea as to his future. He feels that his honour is irreparably injured by the incident at the embassy, his love of work and his strength are undermined, and his passion is a hopeless one. Consequently he is revolving in a dangerous circle: there is no way out but death. This thought becomes more and more attractive to him. He begins to surround it with religious sanctity. He hopes for God's loving acceptance. "For would a man, a father, be capable of anger, if his son returned unexpectedly, fell on his neck and cried: 'Father, I have returned. Be not angry that I put an end to the wanderings which it was thy will that I should endure yet longer. The world is always the same; pains and labour, reward and joy; but what are these to me? I am only at rest where thou art, and before thy face will I suffer and rejoice'—And thou, Heavenly Father, wouldst thou cast him from thee?"

Such is his state during November and the greater part of December. The more the outer world becomes a dark and barren wilderness, the more, too, the inner. He is determined to die. But he wishes to see Lotte once more. On the day when the sun gives us the smallest measure of light he staggers to her home. He finds her alone and puts her into the greatest confusion. In order to relieve the painful situation she gets his translations from Ossian and begs him to read them aloud. They are the most harrowing dirges of Colma and Alpin, and draw forth a torrent of tears. After an emotional pause Werther reads on with trembling voice. But when he comes to the melancholy vision of

Ossian, "The time of my fading is near, the blast that shall scatter my leaves. To-morrow shall the traveller come; he that saw me in my beauty shall come. His eyes will search the field, but they will not find me," he is no longer able to contain himself. In complete despair he throws himself at Lotte's feet, grasps her hands, presses them to his eyes and against his brow. And Lotte, suspecting his inner struggle, bows over him in sorrow. Then he embraces her and covers her lips with passionate kisses. She pushes him away and, trembling between love and anger, hurries out of the room. Werther shoots himself the next night.

We have followed the inevitable development with bated breath; and when the bullet puts an end to the life of the weary wanderer we, the cool, corroded sons of the twentieth century, are inclined to mingle our tears with the aged steward's and kiss the lips of the departed.

In Werther fell the noblest and purest of human souls. With inexhaustible love he embraced mankind and shared all their joys and sorrows; it was his greatest delight to help the children and the poor: to him, as to his Saviour, they were dearest; nothing harsh or evil entered his breast, and he shuddered as he embraced Lotte, though but in a dream. He surveys the world with penetrative speculation and glows with most genuine love for nature, and all that is great, good, and beautiful. Hence we love him, must love him, despite the fact that he is idle, weak, and vacillating. Yet we excuse in him even these failings; for we feel that his idleness does not spring from a disinclination to work, but from a distaste for work that kills the spirit and yet bears no fruit; that his weakness is only the reverse of his extreme sensitiveness; and that his vacillation comes from the pressure of intense passion. We are so little able to withdraw our sympathy from him that we almost fear that we ourselves, with our mediocre strength, would sooner than he fall a victim to such a storm of passion.

From his character flows the plot, as the brook from its source. He must needs be wrecked on the reefs of the

world, no matter where he strikes them. Whether his feeling of honour is wounded, or he is vexed by the pettiness of a superior, or martyred by an endless, hopeless love, his doom is sealed. For it may be said, that even if he had won possession of Lotte, still he could not have been saved. His soul would have gone to pieces on the thousand and one other rough places of life. There is no room in this world for an idealistic dreamer, who everywhere demands perfection and absoluteness, and yet with uncanny acuteness everywhere discovers imperfections and limitations, which he feels with extraordinary keenness; who, furthermore, is not engaged in any productive activity which might act as a counterpoise to the discords which torture his soul. Hence Goethe rightly calls the untoward motives which lead to Werther's ruin mere incidental sufferings that overthrow him after he has been already undermined by visionary dreams and speculations. The criticism that Goethe should have limited himself to one passion—for example, unfortunate love—as a motive for Werther's suicide, is wholly without justification. The poet was at liberty to decide how many passions he would employ as incidental motives, or rather how many he would elicit from the depths of Werther's nature by means of external charms. That he did not limit himself to one redounds to his glory. The personality of the hero came out all the more clearly and more fully, and his downfall was the easier to understand. Likewise it is a mark of the fineness of Goethe's plastic art that he added to the love-motive exactly the motive which, next to love, is most powerful in the soul of a man, viz., honour and self-respect. By this means he at the same time made it possible to put Werther into an office and thus differentiate him from a weakling, who makes no attempt to escape from an unhappy passion and engage in serious activity. And there resulted the further advantage that the novel is not all one single chain of love sighs, and that a considerable time—a year and a half — passed by before the noble nature of the hero was undermined.

The self-destruction of a rich and noble mind was a

fruitful motive, but entirely suited to engross the interest of the reader only when made the nucleus of an involved plot. Goethe neglected this advantage when he reduced the plot to the minimum. By so doing he set himself the task of draughting, instead of a series of events, a series of soul-portraits from which the destruction of self must follow as a natural consequence. For the presentation of these portraits he could have chosen no more artistic form than a monologue in letters—a form, which, if carried to too great length, becomes wearisome. However, the interest never flags for a moment; on the contrary, the suspense and pleasure are heightened from letter to letter.

What a wealth of life Goethe has put into this artistic mould! We find ourselves now in nature's broad domain, now by the kitchen fire in the Wahlheim inn, now at the well, now in the garden of the parsonage, now in the nursery at the steward's, now in the brilliant drawing-room of the count, now in the miserable village tavern. We are taken through all the seasons of the year and through all the moods of nature: the flowery splendour of spring, the glow and fruitful abundance of summer, the melancholy fading of autumn, and the rough storms of winter; in the bright sunshine, in the light of the moon, in the darkness of night, in fog, rain, and snow. And this all harmonises most effectively with Werther's condition of soul.

And as we are attracted by the variety of situation and scenery, so also by the diversity of finely delineated types of men, which Goethe, in spite of the uneventful plot, has succeeded in creating. With Werther, the great masterpiece, next to Hamlet the most peculiar figure in the literature of the world, we have already become acquainted. Contrasted with him and his morbid quest of the highest and the final is the beautiful figure of Lotte, whose health, cheerfulness, practical sense, and contentment in the little duties of the home fill us with a lively satisfaction. And, beside these chief characters, the prosaic husband, Albert; a belletristic prince; a haughty, narrow-minded nobility; pedantic officials; good, but prejudiced parsons; noble

women, pert daughters, and a troop of most charming children. By far the most of these figures have little to do and little to suffer, but they are drawn so round and full that we contemplate their portraits with the same pleasure as the unknown or to us indifferent persons whom the brush of a Titian or a Velasquez has thrown upon the canvas. But where our eyes and our hearts are at rest the poet stimulates our thought. Profound observations on the relation between man and the world, man and nature, duty and desire, good and evil, are scattered here and there undogmatically and without any design, and give us an insight into the real world of the novel from the standpoint of the eternal and the infinite. At the same time the poet brings us into an attitude of mind in which we pardon what is called guilt, because we understand it, or at least seek to understand it.

Finally, the most animating feature of the novel is the wonderful warmth and naturalness that breathe from every page of the work. The style is elevated and yet not artificial. We always hear the spoken word. We always have the feeling that some one is talking to us, amiable, fiery, spirited; he often speaks in long chains, link is joined to link with convincing eloquence, but there are no carefully weighed, artificially constructed sentences. Everything flows as freely and irregularly as from the lips of one speaking out of a full heart. And how this style adapts itself to the subject or the mood! It is of exalted power when the great riddles of the world are under discussion or when the speaker is filled with sublime enthusiasm or infinite pain; it is of biblical simplicity in the description of idyllic conditions. It is now hurried and nervous,—read, for example, the letter in which the first acquaintance with Lotte is described,—now charmingly gentle and calm, now soft and elegiac, now defiant and rebellious. We think we are reading, now a psalm, now a hymn, now a bit of Homer, now the fragment of a drama. This wonderful novel in letters glistens and gleams with all the forms and colours of style, and weariness is wholly a stranger to it. From the great

periods, rushing on in splendid cascades, at the beginning of *Werther* (second letter) to the last terse lapidary sentences which roll over the grave like the rumbling salutes of cannon, this style captivates and agitates our hearts.

If the effect is still so great to-day, one can imagine what it must have been at the time when the work was the relaxing of a throbbing tension, the most perfect expression of the world-woe which for years had reigned in Germany, having grown up under the influence of the melancholy English elegy, the tirades of Rousseau against the corruptions of civilisation, and under the influence of an inactive life which afforded ample time for discovering the secrets of one's own heart and the hearts of others. What Goethe had suffered, thousands of others had suffered, less intensely, it may be, and under fewer forms. But he alone had known how to give divine expression to these sufferings.

Moreover, the wider circles, who, because of regular, wholesome occupation had not become victims of that gloomy, self-torturing pessimism, were profoundly affected by the tragic simplicity and grandeur as well as by the all-pervading warmth of the work. The scholar and the lady-in-waiting, the cobbler's apprentice and the servant girl, alike came under the spell of this magic. Of the multitude of enthusiastic critiques let us select but two. What they say is what the whole reading world thought in one form or another. The Suabian poet Schubart writes: "Here I sit with melted heart, with throbbing breast, and with eyes shedding tears of voluptuous pain, and tell you, kind reader, that I have just—read?—no, devoured my dear Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. Shall I criticise? If I could, I should not have the heart. Even the goddess Critica herself stands bathed in tears in the presence of this masterpiece of sensitive human feeling. . . . Shall I select a few beautiful passages? I cannot. It would be like lighting tinder with a burning-glass and saying: 'Behold, man, this is the fire of the sun!' Buy the book and read it yourself! But take your heart with you! I would

rather be poor for ever, sleep on straw, drink water, and eat roots, than not be able to feel with the heart of a writer of such sentiment."

But the Thuringian poet Heinse wrote: "Whoever has felt and still feels what Werther felt, finds, when he tries to express it, that his thoughts vanish like thin mist before the blazing sun. One's heart is so full of it and one's head is heavy with tears. O human life, what a glow of sorrow and joy thou canst contain! . . . There ever flow the purest springs of strongest feeling of love and life in living streams of holiness undefiled, even when they swell to floods of highest passion. Let every female reader take it up in one of her happy, quiet hours when the tide of her soul has again reached the flood. . . . Receive my warm and cordial thanks, thou good genius, who hast made a gift of *Werthers Leiden* to noble souls."

A very few received the work with divided feelings, or with coolness or hostility; these were chiefly the clergy and utilitarians who feared dangerous results.*

To find Lessing [47] among the number, though he did not fail to recognise the poetical merits of the work, is to us an unpleasant discovery. But to him the (apparent) chief motive, a noble youth taking his own life because of unfortunate love, was in itself odious, and he was inclined to blame Christian civilisation for having produced such individuals. "Do you for one moment believe," he writes to Eschenburg, "that ever a Roman or Greek youth took his life thus and for such a reason?" "Certainly not," he adds. We will not say "Certainly not" with such a degree of assurance. Hæmon's † suicide was not very different from Werther's, as Lessing understands it. But this much

* Lotte and Kestner felt deeply offended by the exposure of delicate details, the possibility of misinterpreting the novel, and by the character of Albert. It was not easy for Goethe to heal the wound. "He cares nothing for the opinion of men," wrote Kestner to a friend in explanation of Goethe's indiscretion, "therefore he cannot put himself in the place of those who neither can nor dare be so."

† Sophocles, *Antigone*, Act v., Scene 1: "Enraged and grieving for his murdered love, he slew himself."—C.

we can grant him: a personality such as Werther's was impossible in antiquity. It is indeed a product of modern Christian civilisation. It required many centuries of a previous development, which, by means of fleeing from the world, turning away from material things, striving after heavenly happiness, penetrating self-observation and examination, produced a depth and refinement of soul-life of which antiquity had no conception. In Germany it was pietism which, a century before *Werther*, had fanned that Christian movement toward subjective study of the individual to a new enthusiasm. If, then, any city was predestined to be the birthplace of *Werther*, it was Frankfort, the birthplace of pietism. Even if this spiritual development brought along with the refinement of the soul-life an effeminacy, a transcending of the real, and many a form of dangerous degeneration, nevertheless it remained the source of great progress in humanity. And Lessing would have recognised this immediately if he had remembered that the same "manliness," which did not take unhappy love tragically, also had no sympathy with the lot of a slave or barbarian, while Werther pities every worm which he unintentionally crushes beneath his feet. If the eighteenth century had desired to rear a monument to the long process of civilisation which had furnished mankind with a wholly new depth of feeling and knowledge of the soul, it could not have found a more pregnant or more beautiful one than *Werther*. And from this standpoint the novel is a great historical document in a still broader sense than if it be considered merely as the most faithful reflection of an important mood of the time.

The storm [48] unchained lashed the sea to fury far and wide. Floods of tears were shed over Werther's fate, and men sought to think and feel as he did. Sentimental youths adopted his costume (blue frock coat, and yellow waistcoat and breeches). Young wives grew melancholy over their prosy husbands and longed for lovers like Werther. Werther and Lotte became a theme of song. Werther urns were set up. The real sources of the work were

sought out; it was imitated; Lotte's letters were written; it was dramatised and converted into a minstrel lay and folk-book. And remarkably enough, this work, so specifically German, with its language almost incomprehensible to a foreigner, and untranslatable, passed with the greatest rapidity beyond the boundaries of the fatherland. In a few years it had marched triumphantly through all the civilised countries of the world. It made the greatest impression on the French, who, naturally very receptive of such subjects, had been specially prepared for it by Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloise*, the weak predecessor of *Werther*. Even the cold-blooded Corsican yielded to the seductive charm of the novel; he is said to have read it seven times, as Alexander had Homer, and to have taken it with him on his campaigns as far as the Pyramids. That he was thoroughly familiar with it was evident in his conversation with Goethe in Erfurt in 1808.

What had begun to ferment in Strasburg had now burst forth in all its power. In *Götz* the stormy, defiant elements in the life of the young generation had found poetic crystallisation; in *Werther*, the visionary, the effeminate, the world-woe. This exhausted the feelings of the Storm-and-Stress movement. The young members of the movement vacillated between these two extremes. While the North Germans were more inclined to the lyric and the lachrymose, the South Germans sought satisfaction rather in the energetic, the forced, the impatient, and the uncouth. But from now on they all recognised in Goethe their leader, herald, and apostle. His name became the sign by which they hoped to conquer. With gigantic strides Goethe's genius had risen to highest power. Hardly had the fatherland become acquainted with him in *Götz*, when he conquered the world [49] with *Werther*. Nothing that he afterward accomplished could outshine the crown of glory which *Werther* laid upon his head. He could produce no higher pleasure nor more powerful surprise.

From now on the world expected of him only the highest achievements, and he could hope to do no more than

satisfy these expectations. This he did but once afterward, and then for a much more restricted circle, with his *Faust*. This, too, in its main outlines, as well as in its most beautiful and effective parts, was an outgrowth of the Werther period.

# XVI

## AFTER WERTHER

The literary lion—New productions and rumours of others—Lavater and Basedow visitors in Goethe's home—The three in Ems—Their journey to the Lower Rhine—Goethe visits the Jacobis—Reconciliation with them—Other new acquaintances—Visit to Jung-Stilling—Merry feast—Goethe and Fritz Jacobi in Cologne—At home again—Gigantic literary conceptions—Aid given to other writers—Klopstock's visit—Other visitors—By his readiness to give financial help to others Goethe becomes involved in debt—*Das Mariagespiel*—Anna Sibylla Münch—The princes of Weimar and suite in Frankfort—Goethe's reconciliation with Wieland—Death of Fräulein von Klettenberg.

"JUST as after a general confession I again felt happy and free and had a new lease of life." So Goethe describes his condition after *Werther*. With unbounded joy, as if he were a university student again, he plunged into the rushing stream of life which began to surge about him in the summer of 1774. Many who were prominent in the field of literature, or sought to become so, not a few who enjoyed a certain distinction because of noble birth or high official rank, together with a large number of the idle and the curious, approached the famous poet in order to make his acquaintance or gain his influence. In an extremely short time he had become a highly praised, popular, and much-talked-of personage. For whatever may have been their attitude toward him, everybody had to confess, either privately or publicly, that he was the most important phenomenon in the intellectual life of Germany, even before *Werther* had appeared. The revolutionary creation, *Götz*, the profound, bold, impassioned reviews

in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, the farces, overflowing with wit, humour, and exuberance of spirit, the exquisite, soulful lyrics, in tender and in heroic vein, and the plans which he was evolving for further works had soon aroused, even in distant circles, admiration, not unmingled in certain quarters with indignation. His projected compositions are mentioned here with the rest, because a great deal more of his work was known than was printed. Of the farces *Götter, Helden und Wieland*, a sharp satire on Wieland's spiritless representation of the Greek heroic world and his weak moral conceptions, had not appeared until Easter, 1774, neither had the *Prolog zu Bahrdts neuesten Offenbarungen Gottes;* but *Pater Brey, Das Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern*, and *Das Unglück der Jacobis*, which was later lost entirely, had either long been in circulation or were known by rumour. The same was true of many unpublished lyrics, and particularly of certain fragments and outlines of dramas. There was talk about a *Mahomet*, a *Cäsar*, a *Prometheus*, and a *Faust*, which surpassed everything that Goethe had ever achieved. Moreover, copies of *Werther* had been sent round since Easter. In the lively literary intercourse of those days news passed rapidly from mouth to mouth and manuscripts from hand to hand. No wonder that the quiet Frankfort house, with its coat-of-arms bearing the three lyres, was a much-sought spot.

The first prominent man who, in the summer of 1774, came from a distance to visit him, ushering in weeks of exceeding joy, was Lavater. The pious, visionary prophet came from his home in Zurich to seek to restore his health at the mineral springs in Ems. He and Goethe had already had some correspondence. Parts of Goethe's little tract, published the year before, entitled *Brief des Pastors zu ——— an den neuen Pastor zu ———*, in which tolerance was preached as a part of faith, had made a profound impression on Lavater. Besides, the poet had sent him profiles for his work on physiognomy, and, finally, the manuscript of *Werther*.

Each was eager to meet the other; each hoped to

convert the other. Goethe thought he could instil independence into Lavater, Lavater faith into Goethe. Each found his plans of conversion superfluous or fruitless; each found the other different and better than he had expected. The most happily surprised of the two was Lavater. He was eight years older than Goethe, very lean, and had a gentle but enraptured expression of countenance. When he came on the 23d of June to pay his visit, Goethe exclaimed: "Art thou he?"—"I am."—"Ineffably sweet, indescribable scene of contemplation," writes Lavater in his diary. "Everything that Goethe said to me was spirit and truth. . . . He read much to me from his papers, and read—read a quantity—drama, epic, and doggerel. One would have sworn that he was saying it for the first time, he was so full of fire. His work, oh, scenes full of true and truest human nature, indescribable naïveté and truth!" "A genius without peer, who excels in everything that he undertakes."

Lavater tarried five days in Goethe's home, surrounded by many admiring and curious visitors, among them Merck, whose sarcastic tongue was loosened when the women examined most carefully even the prophet's bedroom. The extraordinary man with his profound insight and feeling had, in spite of all differences, so ingratiated himself in the poet's heart that Goethe decided to accompany him as far as Ems. He had hardly returned home when a prophet of another sort presented himself, Basedow, the champion of a new pedagogy based on the principles of Rousseau,—a sharp contrast to Lavater. Lavater, a fine, clean personality with an agreeable expression of countenance and a pleasant tone of voice; Basedow, ugly, rude, dirty, and harsh-voiced; the former devout and patient, the latter extremely rationalistic and hostile to all dogma, a reckless antagonist of the convictions of others. Goethe was nevertheless attracted by his active and original mind and defended himself good-naturedly against his peculiar notions. It was more striking that Lavater, whom Basedow followed to Ems, came to a most harmonious understanding with his

opposite. But the two men were so deeply interested in the newness of the ideas which they represented, the one on pedagogy, the other, physiognomy and Christian mysticism, that they easily overlooked many things in each other. And if Basedow became too radical Lavater brought him back to reason by a cordial, "*Bisch guet*" ("Be good now"). Goethe could not long endure being so near to these peculiar celebrities and yet separated from them. On the 15th of July he followed them to Ems, and now the three formed the strangest triad that could have been brought together in Germany at that time.

Happy days were spent together. Lavater was not a devotee; with all his religion he was cheerful, witty, and fond of life. Goethe was bubbling over with merriment. From early morning till late at night he was employed in one continual round of dances, masquerades, serenades, and excursions. Meanwhile he did not fail to learn what he could from his two prophets, and it actually happened that during a ball on one occasion he quickly ran up-stairs to see Basedow, became absorbed in the discussion of a philosophical problem, and a half-hour later was back whirling about with his partner in the dance.

On the 18th of July the three started together on a journey to the Lower Rhine. They travelled by boat, first down the Lahn. While in sight of the Lahneck castle Goethe improvised the spirit-greeting, *Hoch auf dem alten Turme steht.* Later he spoke about "*die Kerls in den Schlössern.*" They dined in Coblentz, and Goethe preserved the memory of the occasion in the exquisite little picture, *Diner zu Koblenz,* which in a few clever strokes portrays his two prophets, between whom he sits as a child of the world.

Then they continued their journey to Neuwied. On the way Goethe's inexhaustible poetic vein yielded the inspiring lyric duo, *Des Künstlers Vergötterung,* in which the master consoles the pupil, who, discouraged by the work of a genius, lays aside his brush. "You will be a master," he says; "your strong feeling of the superior greatness of this

artist shows that your mind is like his." In the evening they landed at Neuwied and paid a visit at Court, where they were most heartily welcomed. On the 20th of July Lavater and Goethe continued the journey. At first they travelled by boat. "Goethe in romantic attire, a grey hat, ornamented with a half-withered bunch of dear flowers," reads aloud from his operetta *Elmire*, declaims and versifies, till they gradually draw near Bonn. There they take a carriage for Cologne, where they separate. Lavater leaves the same day for Mühlheim, Goethe for Düsseldorf, where he makes the acquaintance of two men whom he has long avoided, the brothers Georg and Fritz Jacobi.

It was woman's work that compromised the misunderstanding between Goethe and the Jacobis, brought about chiefly by Georg's effeminate, fulsome, and self-complacent manner. One of the women, the young aunt of the Jacobis ("aunty"), Demoiselle Johanna Fahlmer, had been living in Frankfort for two years, and by her tender emotions and uncommonly well-trained intellect had soon endeared herself to Goethe. Another was a capable daughter of the Netherlands, Fritz Jacobi's wife, Betty, clever, cordial, cheerful, realistic, reminding one of a Rubens figure. The third was the true-hearted half-sister of the Jacobis, Lottchen, who like her sister-in-law had from time to time visited in Frankfort. All together gradually overcame Goethe's dislike, which, so far as Fritz Jacobi was concerned, had very little foundation. With his tender heart, only too ready to make rich amends for every wrong he had done, Goethe needed only to meet Fritz Jacobi, with his fine nature and depth of feeling to take him to his heart at once. In his enthusiasm he writes to Fritz's wife, who is away from home: "Your Fritz, Betty, my Fritz. You triumph, Betty, and I had sworn never to mention his name to his dear ones, until I could call him, as I thought I could call him and now do. . . . How fine, that you were not in Düsseldorf, that I did the simple bidding of my heart. Not brought in by a master of ceremonies and introduced with apologies, I fell right down out of the sky

before Fritz Jacobi! And he and I, and I and he! And before a sisterly look could prepare the way we were what we should and could be."

In the strengthening of the bond of union Spinoza was no small factor. Goethe had recently overcome the prejudices earlier implanted in him against this philosopher and had just read his *Ethica*, where he had found soothing for his passions and acquired a broad and liberal view of the physical and moral world. But what pleased him especially was the infinite unselfishness which shines through Spinoza's teachings. For to be unselfish in everything, most unselfish in love and friendship, was his own highest pleasure, his maxim, his practice. Now Fritz Jacobi was likewise an admirer of Spinoza and was impressed with the grandeur and logic of his system, which at the same time seemed to him to demonstrate the limitations of the understanding. The difference between his and Goethe's attitude toward the Dutch philosopher made it necessary for them to come to a mutual understanding, and lent an enhanced charm to their intercourse. Furthermore, Goethe had at that time not penetrated deeply enough into the metaphysical basis of Spinozism, and, on the other hand, was too much given to believe in things beyond the realm of sense not to lend a willing ear to the philosophy of faith by which Jacobi sought to transcend Spinoza's pantheism, that denies a personal extramundane God and the freedom of the will.

In Pempelfort, Fritz Jacobi's country-seat, near Düsseldorf, Goethe met the elder brother, Georg; also the poet Heinse, whose *Laidion*, glowing with sensuality, had charmed him; and Werthes, whose emotional life was half Wielandian, half Klopstockian. Goethe, whose real heart was as beautiful as it was rarely disclosed, took the circle by storm. Heinse called him the "youth of twenty-five, genius, might, and strength, from toe to crown, his heart full of feeling, his mind full of fire, with the wings of an eagle, *qui ruit immensus ore profundo.*" * From Pempel-

* *Cf.* Horace, *Odes*, 4, 2, 7 *f.*: immensusque ruit profundo Pindarus ore.—C.

fort Goethe with the two Jacobis and Heinse went to Elberfeld to visit Jung-Stilling. Goethe could not deny himself the pleasure of surprising his dear old friend with a joke. From the hotel where he lodged he sent for Doctor Jung, saying he was ill. Jung found the strange patient lying in bed with heavy cloths about his neck and head, and stretching out his hand. Jung had hardly examined his pulse when he felt two arms about him and recognised to his indescribable joy his former fellow-student at Strasburg. By chance Lavater also arrived the same day with a few queer saints, and the whole company dined with several people of the city at the home of one of Lavater's friends. About all the movements in German intellectual life were here represented. Jung has given us a splendid description of this round table. All were absorbed in spirited conversation. But Goethe finds no repose in his seat. The remarkable circle offers him royal amusement. He does not know how he shall control his inward pleasure, makes the most varied grimaces, dances around the table, and plays all sorts of pranks. The Elberfeld Philistines think the man must be a little daft. But Jung and others thought they would burst with laughter, when some one would stare at him with pitying glance as it were and he would turn and annihilate the starer with his great piercing eyes.

After another short stay in Pempelfort Goethe returned to Ems. Fritz Jacobi went with him as far as Cologne; and here the happiness of the two reached its climax. The ruins of the cathedral were depressing rather than uplifting to Goethe, but the house of the deceased Cologne patrician, Jabach, which had for a century remained unchanged in its artistic furnishings, and in which the family group by Lebrun (now in the Berlin Museum) represented the former occupants with as lifelike freshness as if they were present in person, made an overwhelming impression upon the poet. A whole train of most far-reaching and affecting thoughts and feelings, of which we can scarcely form any conception, were inspired in him by this sight. The deepest depths of

his human powers, as he says, were here sounded, and all the goodness and love in his soul evoked. In this state of ecstasy he seems to have indulged in rapturous improvisations before the painting. In short, Fritz Jacobi was most profoundly moved by his words, sank on his bosom, and wept "sacred tears." The evening was a worthy end to the day. They were in the parlour of the Gasthof zum Geist, the moon rose over the Seven Mountains and cast its silvery sheen upon the softly flowing waters of the Rhine. Goethe sat on the table and recited his newest romances, *Es war ein Bule frech genung* and *Der König in Thule*, with all the more expression as they had not yet been sent out into the world. At midnight he called Jacobi out of bed. They revelled in the full exchange of thought, and as Jacobi listened to Goethe's words it seemed to him as if he were receiving a new soul. "I could not let you go," he confessed forty years later, with a fervour as if he had just passed through the memorable experience.

In Ems Goethe saw Lavater only for a moment, but passed considerable time with Basedow. In the middle of August he was at home again, to the joy of his mother, to whom the house in his absence had seemed as lonesome as if completely deserted.

A new and more stirring life than ever followed. His creative power and his desire to produce, which had arisen to such extraordinary height, kept him in a restless activity. One mighty subject after another he dragged into his poetic workshop and played with the great blocks of marble as if they were pebbles. *Cäsar*, *Mahomet*, *Prometheus*, *Faust*, were still in hand when he took up a new and gigantic subject, *Der ewige Jude*. In a long-drawn-out epic, *à la* Hans Sachs, as the surviving fragments show, he intended to follow the wandering Jew through the centuries, tarrying at important points in the history of religion and the church, and in this way give a figurative presentation of his own attitude toward Christianity and the church in a witty and grotesquely humorous style. Beside these great works he had a hundred small ones in hand. His poetical pro-

jects and ideas followed him without ceasing, and he must often have sprung out of bed in the middle of the night in order to fix some poetic inspiration upon the first scrap of paper. And as if he did not have burden enough of his own he loaded himself down with the work of others, for example, Salzmann's *Moralische Abhandlungen*, Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, Jung-Stilling's *Lebensgeschichte*, and Lenz's writings. The most of the undertakings begun at that time remained fragments. Neither time nor strength was ample to finish them.

New guests arrived. Early in October came the most honoured lord of the German Parnassus, Klopstock. The author of the *Messias* and the *Oden* fulfilled Goethe's expectations only in a moderate measure. For he preserved a serious and measured dignity and avoided a discussion of the things that were nearest to our poet's heart, namely, poetry and literature. On the other hand, he expatiated at great length on the subjects of riding and skating. Goethe accompanied him as far as Darmstadt and on his return composed in the post-chaise the ode *An Schwager Kronos*, a grotesque effusion of his restless longing for active life, in which he says he would rather drive, young and intoxicated, at top speed to hell than grow grey at a slow trot. Great Klopstock was followed by his Göttingen disciples, who had already learned to admire Goethe from afar because of his feeling style and his opposition to the effeminate manner of Wieland and Georg Jacobi. First of all, Boie and Hahn. Boie, the editor of the *Musenalmanach*, after corresponding with Goethe for some time, spent two days (October 15th and 17th) in Frankfort. After the first day he wrote to his family: "A whole day spent all alone and undisturbed with Goethe, with Goethe, whose heart is as great and noble as his mind! I cannot describe the day! . . . I made him read a great deal to me, completed works and fragments, and in everything rings his original tone, his peculiar force, and with all the oddities and errors everything bears the stamp of genius. His *Doctor Faust* is almost finished and seems to me the greatest and most peculiar of all!" Goethe

exerted a stronger influence on Werthes, who visited him on a journey to Switzerland, and on this occasion for the first time really became acquainted with him, as in Pempelfort he had been obliged to keep in the background. In Berne he is still completely carried away by the impression he has received. "This Goethe," he writes from there to Fritz Jacobi, "of whom and of whom alone I should like to speak and stammer and sing and chant dithyrambs with you from the rising till the setting of the sun and from the setting till the rising again, whose genius stood between Klopstock and me and cast, as it were, a robe of sunshine over the Alps and snow-covered mountain peaks, himself ever before me and beside me and above me,—this Goethe has, so to speak, risen above all the ideals which I had ever formed of the directness of feeling and observation of a great genius. Never before could I have given such a sympathetic exegesis of the feeling of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, which prompted them to say: 'Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?' Let us make of him our Christ, and let me be the smallest of his disciples. He spoke so much and so well with me; words of everlasting life, which, as long as I breathe, shall be my creed." Also the Swiss pedagogue von Salis, the Strasburg theologian Blessig, and many others came to pay their respects to our poet. The number of his friends in Frankfort was increased by the arrival of Heinrich Leopold Wagner, who settled there in the autumn and was at first well received by Goethe because of his many good qualities.

Not all the visits were free from a bitter after-taste. As Goethe's generosity and good nature were well known, he was thronged by persons in need, and adventurers who borrowed money from him or asked him to go their security. He unwillingly and very seldom refused and thus he found himself obliged to incur debts to his near friends (La Roche, Jacobi, Merck) which burdened him for years afterwards. Neither were his parents always edified by the concourse of visitors, much as they were flattered by the fame of their

son. The disturbance in the house was annoying to his father, and the continual entertaining of literary and often very questionable guests grew to be a burden to his mother. Besides, his father feared that the ceaseless interruptions might completely divert him from his serious calling in life, which he now, at the age of twenty-five, ought at last to be taking up in earnest; while his mother, who had a deeper insight into his private affairs, was worried over the consequences of his generosity and willingness to go security. Accordingly both considered marriage the best means of making their son more settled, regular, and practical. To their joy things seemed to be drifting that way.

In the circle of Frankfort friends a game, known as *das Mariagespiel*, had been in vogue for some time. Young men and young women were paired off by lot, and the separate couples had to consider themselves husband and wife for one week. In the spring of 1774 the lot three times in succession coupled Goethe with the sixteen-year-old Anna Sibylla Münch.[50] When it happened the third time the merry law-giver of the company, Herr Krespel, declared that Heaven had spoken, the couple could never again be separated. Goethe, who was pleased with the pretty, sensible, domestic girl, was quite satisfied with this decree and in the cordial intercourse, during which the intimate "*Du*" was gradually carried from the game into real life, the pleasure of the young people in each other's company grew to fondness. Goethe's parents looked upon the attachment with great joy, for they had long been kindly disposed toward the girl and now hoped that their son would find in her a good wife and they a good daughter-in-law. They hoped the betrothal would soon take place, and, in order that the bond might not be loosened as a result of idle literary associations, Goethe was to take his long-promised journey to Italy and be married immediately after his return. The eager desire for such developments veiled the clear eyes of his mother. Otherwise she would have seen that nothing was farther from his mind than thoughts of marriage, and that he was least of all thinking

of beginning the life of a *pater familias* by the side of young Fräulein Münch. Not a trace of passion had she inspired in him; in all the letters of the year 1774 there is scarcely anywhere anything to remind us of the lovely intercourse with this agreeable partner. In the autumn the weak chain of flowers fell withered from his arms. But the year did not come to an end without his forming another attachment which, eleven months later, gave the most decisive direction to his life.

It was on the 11th of December that there arrived in Frankfort on their journey to Paris the two princes of Weimar, Karl August and Konstantin, with their suite, Count Görtz, Captain von Knebel, and Master of the Horse Stein-Kochberg. Knebel, who took a lively interest in literature and had himself made some literary attempts, did not fail to seek out the author of *Werther* and invite him to pay his respects to the princes. Goethe was received by them with much ease and cordiality, and as Möser's *Patriotische Phantasien* chanced to be lying on the table the conversation turned to the reform proposals of this patriotic politician. It was not difficult for Goethe to win the favour, especially of the clever, active Crown Prince Karl August. He was invited to follow the princes to Mainz, where they were to take a few days of rest, and although his father, with his democratic sympathies, had a deep mistrust of any kind of intercourse with princes, yet by the intervention of Fräulein von Klettenberg Goethe received permission to accept the invitation. Incidentally this evidences Goethe's obedience to his father and his reverence for him in spite of his own years and fame. With Knebel, who had remained behind a day in Frankfort "in order to enjoy the best of all men," Goethe followed the princes on the thirteenth and was again very cordially received. When the conversation drifted to recent literature, and Goethe's satire on Wieland, who was very popular at the Weimar Court, was discussed, the princes felt obliged to use the opportunity to prepare the way for a reconciliation between the two poets, and they persuaded Goethe to direct a conciliatory letter to Wieland.

Goethe was not unwilling to do so. For, after all, he was fond of Wieland, and had but half willingly, and in order to give vent to a momentary anger, dashed off the satire while sitting over a bottle of Burgundy, and then, at the urgent request of his friends, had given Lenz, in whose hands it then was, permission to have it printed. When he had written the letter, he exclaimed sorrowfully, as Knebel narrates: "Now I am again good friends with everybody, with the Jacobis, with Wieland—and I don't like it at all. Such is the nature of my soul, that just as I must have something to which I can attribute for a time the ideal of excellence, so also in turn something as the object of my extreme wrath."

Goethe and the Weimar guests did not part without having gained an enduring appreciation of one another. But, in spite of the favourable course of the visit, Goethe's father retained his mistrust, and declared that all friendliness of noble lords was mere dissimulation, and they were perhaps planning some evil against him. With this continued difference of opinion it must have saddened Goethe all the more when his good and helpful mediator, Fräulein von Klettenberg, who had so recently made his journey to Mainz possible, was called away by death during his absence. Her heavenly life had come to a heavenly end. Goethe felt that in this kind friend Frankfort had suffered a severe loss. "Mama," he writes in a bitter mood to Sophie La Roche, "that calks a fellow's seams and teaches him to hold his head straight.—For myself—I shall tarry yet a little."

Only a few weeks, and all sad thoughts were crowded out by new exuberance of love and life.

# XVII

## LILI

Goethe's introduction to Lili Schönemann—Mutual love—Difference in their intellectual and social surroundings—Goethe's discomfort in the Schönemann salon—Demoiselle Delf, by her scheming, brings about an unexpected betrothal—Goethe awakes to the situation and longs to be free again—The Counts Stolberg and Baron Haugwitz in Frankfort—Goethe accompanies them on a journey to Switzerland—The boisterous Storm-and-Stress travellers—Goethe visits his sister—She urges him to dissolve his engagement—The journey through Switzerland—Lili occupies his thought and keeps him from going to Italy—On the homeward journey Zimmermann shows him a silhouette of Frau von Stein—Further intercourse with Lili—Her relatives and his father oppose the marriage—Goethe, after a severe struggle, resolves to end matters—He accepts an invitation to Weimar—Embarrassing incidents connected with his departure.

IT was probably on New Year's Day, 1775, that Goethe, at the suggestion of a friend, made a visit to the home of Frau Schönemann, *née* D'Orville. Frau Schönemann, who had been a widow for twelve years, was the owner of a large banking business on the Kornmarkt, and her family consisted of four sons and one daughter, Elizabeth (Lili), at that time in the middle of her seventeenth year. At the Schönemanns' Goethe met a large company assembled for a private concert. Very soon his attention was fixed upon the graceful figure and the beautiful, soulful face of the daughter of the house. She sat at the grand piano and played with surpassing technique and charm. "I stood at the lower end of the piano in order to be near enough to mark her figure and

character; she had something childlike in her bearing; the movements necessary in playing were unaffected and light.

"After finishing the sonata she stepped to the end of the piano in front of me; we greeted each other without further ado, for a quartet had already begun. At the close of it I stepped somewhat nearer to her and made a few complaisant remarks about the pleasure I felt that the beginning of our acquaintance had also included an introduction to her talent. She knew how to return the compliment very politely, retained her position and I mine. I could see that she was looking at me attentively and that I was being observed in a peculiar way by the company, which I could very well put up with, inasmuch as I myself had something very beautiful to look at. Meanwhile we scrutinised each other, and I will not deny that I seemed to feel an attraction of the tenderest kind. The moving about of the company and the music hindered, however, any closer acquaintance that evening. But I must confess to my agreeable sensations, when, at parting, the mother gave me to understand that they hoped to see me again soon, and the daughter seemed to second the request with a certain friendliness."

Goethe did not fail to respond to the invitation, and before he was fully aware a strong liking for Lili had taken possession of his heart. Lili, in turn, felt the magic charm of the poet's personality. It was not, however, the first time that she had made a conquest and been courted. Quite early in life admirers, half in admiration and half from calculation, had gathered about this lovely blond daughter of a rich family, and she had been pleased with their gallantries as with a pretty game. But in the moment when Goethe approached her a deep passion awoke in her heart, that at once lifted her whole being above her former toying nonchalance. She clung to the great personality of her lover with tender devotion. What he communicated to her in the way of higher culture, character, seriousness, and worldly wisdom she gladly received, and in the soil of

her superior qualities of heart and mind it grew to fairest flower. Thus she became the creature of his influence. But the more she became so, the more firmly she bound her lover to her. A violent love fever, unknown since the days in Wetzlar, came upon him, and all his joys and sorrows, all his habits and inclinations seemed to have been submerged in this one passion.

Weg iſt alles, was du liebteſt,
Weg, worum du dich betrübteſt,
Weg dein Fleiß und deine Ruh,
Ach! wie kamſt du nur dazu?

Reizender iſt mir des Frühlings Blüte
Nun nicht auf der Flur;
Wo du, Engel, biſt, iſt Lieb' und Güte,
Wo du biſt, Natur.*

But the happiness which he enjoyed was not unalloyed. Such completely happy hours as he had spent by the side of Lotte and Friederike came seldom any more. Not through the fault of Lili, who was as noble, true, and pure as either of them and surpassed them both in intellectual endowments. But her surroundings were foreign and at times even odious to the poet.

He was accustomed to move in the circles of scholars, artists, clergymen, and officials, where he found a congenial intellectual atmosphere, and was conscious of a sympathetic appreciation of his nature. And even in those families whose heads had not been anointed with academic oil, such as the Schönkopfs and the Buffs, he had felt the refreshing

* Gone is all thy former love,
Gone what sorrow's source did prove,
Gone repose and toil's delight,
Oh, what brought thee to this plight?

Not more charming is the vernal blow
Now upon the lea;
Love and kindness are where thou dost go,
Nature is with thee.

LILI

(From Heinemann's *Goethe*)

breath of warm-hearted, free humanity. These homes were, at the same time, the abiding-place of a plain simplicity in the external things of life and of a spontaneity in giving and receiving, which were most charming to the young poet.

How completely different was the atmosphere which surrounded him in the Schönemann home! aristocratic furnishings, most modish dress, social restraint, and a cool, calculating realism, which valued material and tangible things above all else. Here, no doubt, he could be honoured as a famous man, but could hardly be appreciated as a poet and human being. And as the Schönemanns and their coterie had no real understanding of him, so had he still less of them. The uncomfortable feelings which arose in him because of this discord were intensified by the burdens laid upon him by the many social functions in the Schönemann home. He who liked best of all to go about in grey beaver frock coat and loosely tied brown silk neckerchief was obliged to appear here in elegant and ever-varied dress, so as not to be different from the dandies, whose only thought was of the present; he who felt most at home in the twilight here had to appear in the full blaze of a hundred candles beaming from ceiling and wall; and though he would have liked to pour out the fulness of his heart to his loved one in secret he was obliged to bear up under the burden of his passion, while plodding along for hours through the weary waste of a barren salon conversation. From these feelings sprang the verses:

Warum ziehſt du mich unwiderſtehlich
Ach, in jene Pracht?
War ich guter Junge nicht ſo ſelig
In der öden Nacht? . . .

Träumte da von vollen, goldnen Stunden
Ungemiſchter Luſt,
Ahnungsvoll hatt' ich dein Bild empfunden
Tief in meiner Bruſt.

Bin ich's noch, den du bei so viel Lichtern
An dem Spieltisch hältst?
Oft so unerträglichen Gesichtern
Gegenüberstellst?*

If he, nevertheless, overcame his dislike and submitted to all the conventionalities imposed by the family and society, this is a proud testimonial to young Lili's worth, for at other times he followed "the customs of no man," for which reason he was nicknamed by his friends the Bear, the Huron, and the Indian. She was to him the rose for whose sake he endured the heath. To be sure he saw his loved one on these society evenings in another and a brilliant light, and uncomfortable as these situations were to him, still he would not for a great deal have been willing to forego the joy of noting Lili's social virtues and recognising that she was qualified for broader and greater circles. And how delicately and deftly she could indicate to him in the midst of a social throng that her thoughts were all with him! "Every look that we interchanged, every accompanying smile bespoke a noble feeling of mutual intelligence, and I was astonished at the mysterious, innocent understanding which arose between us in the most human and most natural way."

At the beginning of spring Lili went to Offenbach to visit her Uncle Bernard and the D'Orvilles, whose villas, gardens, and terraces offered the lovers more desirable surroundings than the hated city salons. Here in rural free-

* Wherefore drawest me against my will
Into thy world so bright?
Did my bosom not with rapture thrill
In the lonesome night?

There I dreamed of many a golden hour
Of joy serene and blest;
Felt thine image, with prophetic power,
Deep within my breast.

Am I still the same 'mid scenes so gay
With light-bedazzled eyes—
I, whom oft thou dost invite to play
With those I so despise?

dom, where nobody deprived the poet of Lili's company, where no mists obscured her bright charms, his love grew to even greater warmth. "Yes, Aunt," he wrote to Johanna Fahlmer early in April, "she was as beautiful as an angel . . . and heavens, how much her beauty is surpassed by her goodness!" He passes blissful days by her side. "It was a state of which it is written, 'I sleep, but my heart watches;' the hours of light and the hours of darkness were alike; the light of day could not outshine the light of love, and the glow of passion changed the night into the clearest day." He began to believe that this time his wandering heart had found a resting-place. "It looks as if the threads by which my fate hangs, and which I have so long been twisting and untwisting in regular rotation, would finally unite" (to Herder, March 25, 1775).

The Easter fair came in the middle of April and brought Demoiselle Delf from Heidelberg, an energetic business woman, who for years had been a friend of the Schönemanns and had known and loved Lili from her youth. As she had long seen through the situation and was convinced that the lovers were suited for one another, and that it was proper to bring the romantic love-making to a practical conclusion, she set to work, negotiated with Goethe's parents and Lili's mother, and after she had received their consent, came into the room one evening to Goethe and Lili and said: "Join hands!" "I was standing in front of Lili," Goethe narrates, "and held out my hand; she, not indeed hesitatingly, but still slowly, laid hers in mine. After a long, deep breath we fell with great emotion into each other's arms. . . . If my loved one had before seemed to me beautiful, graceful, attractive, she now appeared a worthy and superior being. She was, so to speak, a double person; her grace and loveliness were now mine, —that I felt as before; but her dignity of character, her self-reliance, her trustworthiness in every way remained her own. I beheld this, I understood it and rejoiced in it as in a capital the interest of which I should share with her as long as I lived." Thus the bond was sealed.

Solemnly and yet roguishly the grey-haired poet adds to his narrative: "It was a strange decree of overruling Providence, that in the course of my singular life I, too, should experience the feelings of one who is betrothed." But the pleasant, tender, satisfied feelings which he had in mind vanished with surprising swiftness. Hardly had the ring bound him when he would have liked to file it off. Events took the same course here as in the case of Friederike. Only the greater the danger the harder the struggle. "I should be a fool," he had exclaimed a few weeks before the betrothal, in *Stella*, under the mask of Fernando, "to allow myself to be fettered. This condition [wedlock] stifles all my powers; this condition robs my soul of all its courage: it shuts me in. I must get out into the free world." The storm of his desire for liberty seizes his ship of life and casts it away from the haven of domestic happiness, to which it had just come near, and out again into the wide sea (to Herder, May, 1775). "I must get out into the free world," was his first clear thought after the betrothal.

Then, just in the nick of time, there came to his home about the middle of May, the fiery disciples of the Göttinger Hain, the two counts, Christian and Friedrich Stolberg, on their way to Switzerland. They were joined in Frankfort by their friend, Baron Kurt von Haugwitz, later Prussian minister, all of them enthusiastic admirers of Goethe. These companions, all overflowing with youthful spirits and idealism, spent happy hours of exalted feeling with Goethe; and Fritz Stolberg, at that time more or less revolutionary, recited some fearful strophes in which he cooled his hatred of tyrants in the blood of tyrants. Frau Goethe, who was call Frau Aja, after the mother in the novel *Die vier Haimonskinder*, was astonished at the terrible outbursts of anger over the tyrants. "She had scarcely ever heard of tyrants," her own son narrates jokingly; "she only remembered that she had seen in Gottfried's *Chronicles* pictures of such inhuman creatures. And in order to give a harmless turn to the raging hatred of tyrants, she brought

up the oldest wines from the cellar and set them on the table, with the emphatic admonition; 'Here is the true blood of tyrants, enjoy it, but leave all murderous thoughts outside my house.' "

It was not difficult for the young noblemen to persuade Goethe to travel with them. His father was also greatly in favour of his going, as he hoped in this way to get his son to make the Italian journey [51] which still remained fixed in the program of his education. Goethe parted from Lili without saying good-bye, but made some allusion to his going. He considered the journey an experiment to see whether he could do without her. Is it possible that she may have understood his allusions, may have had a suspicion that her lover, newly betrothed to her and glowing with passion would separate himself from her for many weeks?

When the four travelling companions arrived in Darmstadt, Merck was greatly displeased that Goethe had joined company with these wild apostles of nature. He scolded him for his indomitable good nature, his endless toleration of others' peculiarities, saying it was stupid, and he would not remain with them long. It was indeed a boisterous Storm-and-Stress company, and Goethe was not the tamest. The elder Stolberg calls him "a wild, uncontrollable, but very, very good fellow." They had all four set out from Frankfort in Werther costume; in Darmstadt they had gone bathing in the open without anything to hide their nakedness; in Mannheim, after drinking to the health of Fritz Stolberg's sweetheart, they had dashed their wine-glasses against the wall; and this was the style they kept up. "If you could see our conduct on this journey, you would observe that we are always in such high spirits," writes Fritz Stolberg in the letter just mentioned. From Mannheim the young men went via Karlsruhe, where Goethe passed a few pleasant days with Karl August, the crown prince of Weimar, and his fiancée, the beautiful Luise von Hesse-Darmstadt, to Strasburg, rich in memories of the past. Here Goethe saw again the good old friend of his

heart, Salzmann; here in his innocence he cordially embraced Lenz, who in the intervening years had plotted many an intrigue against him; here he also met the princes of Meiningen, with whom he had previously become acquainted on their visit in Frankfort; beside these, a wide circle of old acquaintances and friends, who made it hard for him to leave the dear city. After a stay of five days he proceeded to Emmendingen to visit his sister, who was longingly awaiting him, while his companions remained in Strasburg.[52] Since her marriage in November, 1773, brother and sister had not seen each other. For the first time he was to see her in her home surroundings. His heart was heavy. He knew that she was not happy, and he did not know how to help her. Neither she nor her husband could be justly reproached for the unsatisfactory condition. Cornelia had been accustomed to a varied and cultured society, to a constant stream of refined, intellectual enjoyments, and to an uninterrupted, refreshing, sympathetic intercourse with her brother; and now she was bound to a husband whose excellence she could not but honour, whose zeal for his profession left her much alone, and whose grave and severe manner discouraged rather than promoted frankness in her. And, besides, there prevailed in the little out-of-the-way place an atmosphere of tedious monotony. Physical ailments helped to make everything seem to her more dreary than it really was. Consequently she spoke very unfavourably of her brother's engagement. She thought that Lili, too, with the difference of natures and habits of the two families, would find no happiness in married life and that it was accordingly her brother's duty to preserve her and himself from such ill fortune. Her urgent appeal fell on unwilling ears. For, although Goethe had undertaken the journey in order gradually to effect his release from Lili, yet he had begun to feel at the first step how vain it is for love to flee from love. On the last day of his visit in Emmendingen, on the 5th of June, he writes to Johanna Fahlmer: "I still feel that I have failed in the chief purpose of my journey and when I return it will be

worse with 'the bear' than before." Thus he goes on losing himself in the world, wends his way through the Black Forest to Schaffhausen, thence to Zurich, where he again joins the Stolbergs and Haugwitz. He spends a week in Zurich, enjoys his intercourse with Lavater, discusses with him the continuation of his *Physiognomische Fragmente*, and delights in the wonderful landscape about the city. He was greatly rejoiced over his personal acquaintance with Pfenninger, Lavater's warm-hearted colleague, with whom he had already had some correspondence, and over the arrival of two young Frankfort friends, Passavant, a theologian, and Kayser, a musician. The way was prepared for a cordial friendship with the intellectually prominent Frau Bäbe Schulthess, but his visits with vain old Bodmer led to nothing beyond cool salutations.

In the assembled group of friends liberty, friendship, love, poetry, wine, and nature produced a wave of jubilation, the height of which we can measure by the pages of Goethe's diary. On an excursion of the whole company on Lake Zurich he made the entry under the date of June 15th:

Ohne Wein kann's uns auf Erden
Nimmer wie dreihundert [Säuen] werden;
Ohne Wein und ohne Weiber
Hol der Teufel unsre Leiber.*

After this another member teased him in these insipid lines:

Dem Wolf, dem tu' ich Esel bohren,
Dadurch ist er gar baß geschoren;
Da sitzt er nun, das arme Schaf,
Und fleht Erbarmung von dem Graf.†

* We were never, but for wine,
Merry as three hundred swine;
No more wine, no women more,
Devil take us, we implore!

† A merry joke on Wolf I played
And most consummately him flayed;
The wretched sheep must now entreat
Compassion at the County's feet.

There are seven other stanzas on these pages in which the jolly companions spin out their burlesque fancies to given rhymes. But in the midst of their exuberant pranks the poet falls into sweet dreams and memories. The image of fair Lili arises before him:

Aug', mein Aug', was ſinkſt du nieder,
Goldne Träume, kommt ihr wieder? *

He tries to banish her spirit:

Weg du Traum, ſo Gold du biſt,
Hier auch Lieb und Leben iſt. †

But nothing can drive the dream away. The barque lands at Richterswyl, and he goes with the wild band to Einsiedeln.[53] From the summit on the southern shore of Lake Zurich he casts his eyes once more over the green lake, the dark forests, the shimmering villages, and the silvery Alpine peaks. His eye is intoxicated, but from his heart arises this sigh:

Wenn ich, liebe Lili, dich nicht liebte,
Welche Wonne gäb' mir dieſer Blick!
Und doch, wenn ich, Lili, dich nicht liebte,
Wär', was wär' mein Glück? ‡

In a pleasant humour he wrote above these verses in his diary the title: "View of the Lake from the Mountain. See the private archives of the poet under the letter L."

The friends reached the abbey of Einsiedeln in good time, and the poet's eye was especially captivated by a most artistically wrought little serrated crown in the treasure chamber. He begged permission to pick up the

* Eye, mine eye, why not behold?
Come ye back, ye dreams of gold?
† Out, thou dream! though gold thou be;
Here is love and life for me.
‡ Dearest Lili, if I did not love thee,
Oh, what rapture in a scene like this!
Yet, sweet Lili, if I did not love thee,
What, what were my bliss?

little crown, and as he took it and held it reverently in his hand he could not help thinking that he should like to press it upon Lili's bright, glittering locks, lead her before a mirror, and witness her joy in her appearance and in the happiness which she spread about her. In Einsiedeln he parted from the boisterous company. His only companion now was quiet, affectionate Passavant.

The two travelled over the toilsome roads past the slender, craggy twin peaks of the Mythenstöcke to Schwyz. Thence they made their way to the Rigi, from the summit of which they could see only isolated spots of the sun-lit earth beneath, through the clefts and rents in the ever-rolling heaps of cloud. They descended to Vitznau, rowed across the magnificent rock-bound lake to Flüelen, and went on to Altdorf, where they spent the night. The scenery thus far had so impressed Goethe that when he directed a few lines to Lotte from Altdorf, he "could tell nothing, describe nothing." And he had not yet seen the grandest sight, the St. Gothard, which the imagination of the time enveloped with wild, mystic romance. Hence he closed his letter with: "Altdorf, three hours from St. Gothard, which we shall ascend to-morrow." He underestimated the distance. On the following day the friends went only as far as Wasen. Thence they climbed through the valley, which seemed to grow ever grander and more awe-inspiring, to Göschenen, then through the narrow, dark, rocky gorge of the Schöllenen, where the scenery became more and more stupendous and wild, over the Teufelsbrücke and through the Urner Loch to Andermatt, whose lovely situation in the broad green valley filled Goethe with joyful astonishment. After a short rest they went on up. Soon the green valley disappeared, and through barren boulders the sumpter path wound its way up through the clouds. The snow came near; storm clouds and fitful gusts, together with roaring waterfalls, heightened the horror of the solitude. "Barren as in the Valley of Death—strewn with bleaching bones. This may be called the Valley of Dragons." Such was Goethe's note, mingling visions with his actual impressions.

In the diary sketches we can already recognise the outlines of Mignon's description of the way over the Alps. Little strips of lakes announced the summit of the pass; the Hospice, looming up out of the mist, assured them that they had reached the goal. Early the next morning—it was the 22d of June—Goethe hastened a little distance down the road that led to Italy, in order to sketch the landscape. Passavant urged him to follow the road on to Italy, unrolling before him a fervid picture of all the beauties that awaited them there. While he was in Zurich Goethe had thought of doing so. But Lili had drawn him back more and more powerfully every day. The next day was her birthday; and should it see him going farther and farther away from her? He was overcome with emotion. A little golden heart that he had received from her in one of their happiest hours still hung warm with love about his neck. He grasps it, kisses it, and we can feel his deep emotion in the touching stanzas: "Token thou of joys for ever gone," etc. He arises quickly and hurries back to the summit, as if he were in danger of being dragged on down by his friend. They retrace their steps as far as Vitznau. Then they go via Küssnacht and Zug to Zurich, where Goethe devotes himself again chiefly to Lavater, whose *Physiognomische Fragmente* offer inexhaustible material for discussion. After about ten days he starts home full of the extraordinary impressions he has received, but without any enthusiasm for Swiss liberty,[54] which in the minds of German youths, his own friends not excepted, ordinarily formed the most beautiful part of the sentiment connected with a Swiss journey. He had sought in vain for this liberty. The return home was via Basel, Strasburg, and Darmstadt. In Strasburg he makes his third pilgrimage to the great cathedral, which moves him to a prayer of confession, praise, and worship. The solemn psalm contains some wonderful strains of sublime pictures of the Alps and love of Lili. "How often has the mist rolled away from my eyes and yet thou hast been steadfast in my heart, all-pervading love! . . . Thou [the cathedral] art one

and living, conceived and developed to maturity, not a conglomerate of patchwork. In thy presence, as in the presence of the foaming, rushing falls of the mighty Rhine, as in the presence of the gleaming snow crown of the eternal Alps, as in the presence of the serene expanse of the lake, and thy cloud-enveloped rocks and barren valleys, grey Gothard, as in the presence of every great thought of the creation, there is aroused to action whatever of creative power there is in the soul. It wells up in poetry and in straggling lines stammers out worship to the Creator, everlasting life, comprehensive, inextinguishable apprehension of Him, who is and was and ever shall be." He is happy to look down from the height "toward his fatherland, toward his love."

In Strasburg, on his return, Goethe became acquainted with the highly honoured Hanoverian court physician, Zimmermann, author of *Von der Einsamkeit.* Zimmermann showed him some silhouettes, among others that of Charlotte von Stein, the wife of the Weimar Grand Master of the Horse. Goethe examined it with interest and wrote these words beneath it: "It would be a glorious sight to see how the world is mirrored in this soul. She sees the world as it is and yet through the medium of love." In Darmstadt Goethe had the pleasure of seeing Herder and his wife. He finished his journey in their company, arriving in his native city on the 22d of July.

"In vain did I travel about three months in the open air," he exclaimed a few days after his return. His longing for Lili had not been diminished by the separation,—increased rather. He found her more beautiful, more mature, more profound. All resolution to give her up melted away at the sight of her. He was enraged at himself that he could not overcome his love. "I am stranded again and would like to box myself on the ear a thousand times that I did not go to the devil while I was afloat," he wrote to Merck early in August. "I can not bear it here long, I must get away again," he wrote about the same time to Countess Auguste Stolberg, who, although he had never seen her, became through her brothers the confidante of his love

sorrows. But the power of his love was so great that instead of keeping away from Lili he sought her out as much as possible. She was in Offenbach again, as in the spring. He followed her thither and took lodgings with his friend André. Happy moments followed, but also very sorrowful ones, when he cursed himself and his fate, and became a burden to himself and Lili. "What vexation!" he wrote in the same letter to Auguste Stolberg. "Oh, that I could tell you all; here in the room of the girl who is making me unhappy without being to blame, with the soul of an angel, whose serene days I am clouding,—I!"

Lili's suffering was doubled and trebled. While, on the one hand, her lover offended her by his vacillating between love, indifference, and defiance, on the other hand, her relatives urged her to dissolve the betrothal. After Goethe's strikingly long absence, her family had lost all faith in the seriousness of his intentions. Furthermore, it was very uncertain what kind of a future lay before this roving poetic genius, and there seemed to be nothing in common between the two families. The difference in religion (Reformed and Lutheran) was for Frankfort a very broad line of separation. Besides, the old Councillor was not satisfied with Lili, whom he considered a fashionable society woman. Finally, talebearers had played a busy part and magnified the incompatibilities as much as possible. Despite all this Lili did not lose hope. She declared with great determination, that, if the objections could not be removed at home, she was ready to go with her lover to America. Goethe added with admiration that she would have had the strength to overcome every obstacle. But was he in any way inclined to profit by this strength? Was not he himself the greatest and most insurmountable hindrance? And clearly as he recognises this, just so little does he feel capable of severing at once the bond which binds him to her. He allows himself to drift on and prolongs the situation without speaking a decisive word.

On the 10th of September, at the wedding of his friend, Pastor Ewald, in Offenbach, Goethe experienced an ex-

alted and beautiful moment by the side of his loved one, even if his joy was mingled with the painful anticipation of the approaching and inevitable separation. "I was in the most cruelly, solemnly sweet situation in all my life," he wrote to Auguste Stolberg. "Through the glowing tears of love I gazed on the moon, and the world, and everything about me was soulful." The following day was the beginning of the Michaelmas fair. It brought a large number of business friends to the Schönemann house. Lili was again obliged to perform the polite and social duties in the parlours of her home, and Goethe saw his graceful, lovely fiancée surrounded by a circle of cooing strangers whom he abhorred. In *Lilis Park* he has given us an exaggerated picture of such situations, portrayed in passionate Storm-and-Stress style. Aided by these outward circumstances, and admonished by the bloody head of Egmont, who was engaging his thought at that time (*cf.* Chap. 23), he gathers the strength to resist Lili's noble and magical personality. Reason gains the ascendency over passion. Now and then lightning flames still flash across his soul, but on the 19th of September—by chance we know the exact day—the storm has spent its rage. He has conquered himself. At the end of a long diary-like letter extending from the 14th to the 19th of September, in which are vividly reflected the zigzag impulses of his heart, he writes in a serious mood to the Countess Stolberg: "O, Gustchen, when I look back over this sheet. What a life! Shall I continue or end for ever with this one? And yet, dearest, when I again feel, that in the midst of nothingness my heart is sloughing so many skins, that the convulsions of my foolish little composition are diminishing, my view of the world becoming more serene, my intercourse with people more self-possessed, lasting, and extensive, and yet my inmost being ever remains solely devoted to sacred love, which gradually throws off all foreign elements by virtue of the spirit of purity, which is love, and will finally become pure as gold,—then I just let things take their course. Perhaps I deceive myself. And thank God! Good-night.

Adieu. Amen." On the following day he spoke but seven words to Lili. They were his farewell. The ring with which he had fettered himself was broken.

Fate made it easier than it otherwise would have been for the poet to preserve the equilibrium of his soul toward Lili. At the same time that he had renounced her, Karl August of Saxe-Weimar, now the ruling duke, arrived in Frankfort. On his journey to Paris the preceding year he had fallen in love twice: with Princess Luise of Hesse-Darmstadt, and with Goethe. He now planned to take both home with him. He received Goethe's promise to follow him to Weimar as soon as he had returned thither with his young wife; and Goethe, who looked upon the invitation, coming at this particular time, as an overruling of a higher power, was glad to consent. A flight to Weimar might mean more to him than a mere withdrawal from Lili's magic circle.

On the 12th of October Karl August, with his young wife, passed through Frankfort on his return. He renewed his invitation, and Goethe was to hold himself in readiness to set out for Weimar with Chamberlain von Kalb, who would follow in a few days with a new carriage. Goethe made all his preparations, but day after day passed without the arrival of the chamberlain or any news to explain his failure to appear. As Goethe had taken leave of everybody and did not care to appear again in public, he stayed in the house and left his acquaintances in the belief that he had already departed. But when he had endured the voluntary imprisonment for more than a week, working constantly at *Egmont*, the isolation from the world began to be burdensome to him and he wrapped himself in a large mantle and went out in the evening for a walk through the streets. He could not refrain from passing by Lili's house. He stepped to the window; the curtains were down, and he heard her at the piano singing his song, "Wherefore drawest me against my will?" "I could not help thinking that she sang it with more expression than ever; I could hear it plainly, word for word; I had pressed my ear as close as the

convex grating would allow. After she had finished the song, I saw by the shadow that fell on the curtains that she had gotten up. She walked back and forth, but I tried in vain to catch the outline of her lovely form through the heavy curtains. Only the firm resolution to depart, not to burden her by my presence, and really to renounce her, as well as the thought of what a strange sensation my reappearance would be sure to make, could determine me to leave her presence so dear to me." A few more days passed; the end of the month had come, and as still there was no news from Herr von Kalb, Goethe's father was triumphant. He said that he had always insisted that it was not well to eat cherries with great lords,* and now his son could see how he himself had been made a fool of; that the invitation, the story about the cavalier left behind with the new carriage, was nothing but a merry court joke at his expense. But seeing that he had taken leave of his friends, and his trunk was packed, he might now carry out the oft postponed journey to Italy. After some hesitation Goethe accepted his father's proposal, and early in the morning of October 30th he set off toward the south. "On the Kornmarkt" (where Lili resided), we read in his diary, "the plumber's boy was noisily straightening up his shop and greeted the neighbour's maid out in the early morning rain; this greeting was in a manner prophetic of the coming day. Ah, thought I, if only— No, I said, there once was a time when I— Whoever has such memories should envy nobody. Lili, adieu, Lili, for the second time, adieu!" He rolled along the Bergstrasse to Heidelberg, where he willingly permitted Fräulein Delf to detain him for a few days as her guest. For he still believed that the Weimar riddle would be solved and his return be made possible. Besides Fräulein Delf had introduced him into a very

* The reason ascribed by the proverb, which occurs in several languages, is that the great lords throw the seeds (or stems) into the faces of their inferiors. Bohn, *Handbook of Proverbs*, p. 78: "Those that eat cherries with great persons, shall have their eyes sprinted (?) out with the stones." See also Borchardt, *Sprichwörtliche Redensarten*, p. 269.—C.

pleasant family (probably Privy Councillor Wrede's), where there was a daughter who resembled Friederike. Fräulein Delf was a zealous matchmaker, and hardly had she noticed a slight attraction between the two young people when she immediately explained to Goethe with great emphasis how promising the outlook was for him by such a union to gain entrance into the service of the Palatinate. Fräulein Delf had developed her plans to him till late in the night. Not long after they had separated the horn of a postilion waked him out of sleep. A courier from Frankfort stopped before the house with a letter from Chamberlain von Kalb, explaining everything, and begging Goethe to return and accompany him to Weimar. Alluring as the picture was that Italy had aroused in his imagination, a low but commanding voice within ordered him northward. Fräulein Delf was quite excited over this sudden turn. She stormed Goethe with a hundred objections, even when the postilion was already before the door prepared to take him back to Frankfort. When she still refused to let him go he finally silenced her with the passionately uttered words of Egmont: "Child! child! no more! As if lashed by invisible spirits the fiery steeds of time are running away with the light chariot of our fate and there is nothing left for us but to muster our courage, hold fast the reins, and guide the wheels now to the right, now to the left, away from a rock here, away from the edge of an abyss there. Whither is he going? Who knows? He scarcely remembers whence he came."

The journey to Weimar was for the purpose of a visit: it developed into a residence for life.

# XVIII

## CLAVIGO—STELLA—DRAMATIC FRAGMENTS

Origin of *Clavigo*—Sources—Merits—Reception—Origin of *Stella*—Sources—Prototypes of the characters—Ferdinand (Goethe) the central figure—Incongruities—Art of characterisation—*Cäsar*—*Mahomet*—*Prometheus*—*Satyros*—*Hanswursts Hochzeit.*

BEFORE following the wanderer to Weimar we shall first review a few productions which had their origin in the last years of his life in Frankfort. For in spite of all distractions his fertility was boundless. "People could demand of me what they would; all that was needed was an occasion of somewhat pronounced character and I was prepared and ready." In *Clavigo* we have an example of such astonishingly rapid production. The immediate impulse to write the play came from his dear partner in the above-mentioned *Mariagespiel*. At one of the weekly meetings, in the spring of 1774, Goethe had read aloud Beaumarchais's fourth *Mémoire*, in which the author describes his quarrel with Clavigo, the keeper of the records of the Spanish Crown. The *Mémoire* received much applause, and pretty Fräulein Münch said to the reader: "If I were your sovereign instead of your wife I should request you to dramatise the *Mémoire*." Boldly and chivalrously Goethe thereupon declared that her wish should be fulfilled within a week. Before the week was up the work was finished.

To be sure, the *Mémoire* fell like a warm rain upon a seed which had long been germinating in the poet's soul. It fitted, in the main, so exactly into real and fancied

experiences of his that, although he dramatised these, yet he was able to take over almost the whole of the second act, together with many other separate passages, from the *Mémoire*, and at the same time to say with pride: "I challenge the critical knife to separate the merely translated passages from the whole without lacerating its flesh, without inflicting a mortal wound, not only on the story, but also on the structure and life of the play." Immediately after its completion Goethe openly confessed to his friends the intimate connection between the chosen material and motives in his own life. In August he wrote to Fritz Jacobi: "His [Beaumarchais's] character and his acts were amalgamated with personal characteristics and acts of my own," and to Schönborn, on the 1st of June: "My hero, an undecided, half-great, half-insignificant character, the pendant to Weislingen in *Götz*, or, rather, Weislingen himself, rounded out into a chief character." In addition to this Goethe assures us in his old age that Clavigo as well as Weislingen had sprung from remorse over his relations to Friederike.

Clavigo, in order better to pursue his high aims, forsakes his sweetheart, Marie, who is afflicted with a pulmonary affection, leaving her a prey to disease and grief. But sorely as the faithless one has wounded her, she loves him still. This is an exact picture of Friederike after Goethe's departure. Goethe's love for Friederike, like Clavigo's for Marie, is dead, but remorse and consciousness of guilt keep her image ever alive before him. "I cannot rid myself of the memory that I have forsaken Marie—deceived her—call it what you will." Merck, no doubt, often found him in such moments of remorse, and comforted him as Carlos does Clavigo. Never were Merck's nature and his peculiar relation to Goethe more truthfully portrayed than here in this drama. A matter-of-fact man, hardened to Mephistophelian coldness, his clear, worldly understanding leads him to claim for extraordinary people special moral dispensations. But what, on the one hand, he loses in our estimation by his merciless ethics that disregards the fate

of inferior beings, he regains, on the other hand, by his warm devotion to his gifted friend, in whose great destiny he firmly believes. "O Clavigo, I have cherished thy fate in my heart as my own."

As Goethe saw himself in the picture of the great yet insignificant, strong yet weak, ambitious yet merciful Clavigo, so likewise in the picture of Beaumarchais,[55] the brother of Clavigo's forsaken sweetheart. How often the thought must have come to him of what he should be likely to do if Cornelia were treated as he had treated Friederike! On such occasions he, who on slight provocation would gnash his teeth and curse in an ungodly manner, doubtless flew into as savage a rage inwardly as that of Beaumarchais in the first redaction of the play, which gave Wieland such a shock. In other respects his imagination, when it followed out the further fate of Friederike, doubtless painted a development such as we find in *Clavigo*, and such as the *Mémoire* afforded until near the close. The blending of real experiences and fancied situations with Beaumarchais's narration is further betrayed by the name Sophie, which is given the sister of Marie, but does not occur in the *Mémoire*. Cornelia bore this name in her circle of friends, and Friederike had a sister named Sophie. For Clavigo's beloved the poet retained the name Marie for the sake of the Madonna-like character which he wished to give her, as he had to her counterpart in *Götz*. Marie's true and unselfish admirer, Buenco, like Carlos, a character created by Goethe, seems to have been suggested by memories of Lenz, who had presumably occupied a similar position with reference to Friederike.

By thus dramatising the *Mémoire* of Beaumarchais Goethe dramatised a painfully sore episode of his own soul-life. Hence we find in *Clavigo* the same glowing fervour of feeling and the same impassioned flow of language as in *Werther*. One can feel the beat of the poet's pulse, feel his throbbing heart driving his hand, which hastens from scene to scene, till Clavigo, with Beaumarchais's dagger in his heart, falls upon the lifeless body of Marie. Not until then

does he feel relieved and lay down his pen satisfied and liberated. Once more he has been able to confess and in fancy atone for his wrong.

What a different play Goethe had produced within a year after *Götz!* This measured limitation in time and place, this powerful unity of action, this noble tone of language, with hardly any traces left to remind us of Storm-and-Stress licence! It was a perfect companion-piece to *Emilia Galotti*, which it also resembled in plot, from which, however, it differed in that it was not the product merely of thought and observation, but of feeling and experience. The errors in technique are so slight that it is not worth while to stop to consider them. The fact that the servant, contrary to his master's orders, merely happens to pass through the street in which Marie dwells, would deserve serious criticism only in case it of itself brought on the catastrophe. This is by no means true. The catastrophe is most powerfully motived in itself. With the acuteness and determination of an angry avenger Beaumarchais would have found and stabbed Clavigo in any event. The trivial motive which Goethe employs to bring things to a climax is merely for the purpose of making the catastrophe simultaneous with Marie's funeral, thus enhancing the dramatic beauty of the last act. A folk-song, *Der Herr und die Magd*, among those he had collected in Alsatia, suggested to him the effective shaping of the closing scene.

When *Clavigo* was published it failed to make the impression which it merited. It was the universal opinion that it was overshadowed by *Werther*, which appeared at the same time, and the younger generation missed particularly the revolutionary tendency which had characterised the substance and form of *Götz*. To the partisans of the Storm-and-Stress movement *Clavigo* seemed a reaction against Goethe's former self. While they still took delight in praising *Götz* as the great model, which they sought, so far as in them lay, to equal or surpass, the poet had now started on another curve which was apparently leading him back to the old regularity of the drama and its

freedom from controversial tendency. Merck's criticism, the most severe of all, without being inspired by the motives of the young generation, was: "You must write no more such rubbish in the future; others can do as well as that." The strong words find their explanation in Merck's expectations of other and higher things, and in the peculiar pedagogical method which he applied to his young friend. Without doubt Merck was impatient to see one of the great subjects, to which Goethe had begun to apply his heavy sledge-hammer, come finished from the forge. He expected a *Faust*, a *Prometheus*, or a *Cäsar;* the poet brought him, instead, *Clavigo*. He could not help fearing that, if he should applaud this product, Goethe, with his pleasure and facility in production and the innumerable motives thronging his mind, would follow this small piece with a host of similar ones, and postpone indefinitely the execution of his greater projects. That these fears were not without foundation is shown by the facts, as well as by a later confession of the poet. Then, too, Merck's likeness, which he could not fail to recognise in Carlos, may have vexed him somewhat. It is remarkable that Merck's critical opinion should still have weight at the present day. This drama, which Tieck pronounced a finished masterpiece, is passed by, either with captious criticism or with subdued praise, as if one were afraid of departing too far from the verdict of the military paymaster of Darmstadt. Goethe himself, not to be despised as a critic of his own works, was pleased with it and proudly attached his name to it, the first of his writings to receive this distinction.

Not quite a year after *Clavigo*,[56] *Stella*, "a play for lovers," came into being. Whereas in *Clavigo* the poet, in a certain sense, used up the remnant of a soul-burden left over from *Götz*, *Stella* sprang from new experiences. It was conceived at the time of his dawning love for Lili, when "with his poor heart he unexpectedly found himself again bearing all the burdens of human fate, from which he had barely rescued himself" (letter to Knebel, April 14, 1775). He was terribly worried as he thought over his love

experiences of the past and those looming up in the future. Friederike was still mourning in Sesenheim, he still saw the sad face of his dear partner of the year before, and how long would it be before Lili, too, was forsaken? Such thoughts gave him an uncanny feeling. "I am simply unbearable. . . . I shall not come to any good end," is his cry of rage in a letter of the beginning of March of the same year. He seeks alleviation from these anxieties in writing. "I should go to ruin, if I did not write dramas now."

Chance may at that time have brought to his notice, or recalled to his mind, the story of Swift's bigamous marriage with Stella and Vanessa, which gave him the outline of the new drama, in which the hero stands between two loving wives and is expected to satisfy the equally justified claims of both. In other ways also life brought this problem home to him. Fritz Jacobi, for example, had incurred a multitude of obligations and debts, and yet his aunt, Johanna Fahlmer, clung to him in resignation and love. But the motive of the action he took from his own life. If, as has been thought, he had drawn his material from the fortunes of Jacobi, he would not have been able to say, at the very time when he was at work on the play, and was promising to send it to Countess Auguste Stolberg, that his productions were always merely the treasured-up joys and sorrows of his life. He owes not a single character to Jacobi's circle. For whereas Johanna Fahlmer may have contributed some colour to Cäcilie, she certainly did not furnish the body of the character. The prototypes of the three chief personages are perfectly clear: for Fernando, Goethe; for Stella, Lili; for Cäcilie, Friederike.

So far as it is at all possible to speak of identity of model and picture, that of Lili and Stella is the least subject to doubt. Furthermore, Goethe, with the sovereign frankness of the Storm-and-Stress period, made no effort to conceal this in any way. Stella is sixteen when she meets Fernando; she has blue eyes and blond hair, is "love itself and goodness"; in their first hours of real friendship she has told him of her former little love affairs and thus won

his love more surely than ever. This is true of Lili in every feature. Besides, scenes from the theatre and from the rural life at the uncle's are unmistakably drawn from the courtship in Frankfort and Offenbach. Also the fact that Stella elopes with Fernando in order that she may belong to him is not very different from Lili's readiness to go with Goethe to America. In only one point has Goethe changed Lili's nature in the poetic portrait. He gave the forsaken one the sentimentality of Lila von Ziegler (*cf.* p. 146). Like this Elysian saint, Stella has her hermitage, her tomb, her rose-altar, and in these sacred places delights in the "joy of grief." Around the idealised figure there hovers a soft halo, and in its purity and nobility of soul, depth of feeling, and exalted human kindness it is truly great. "One cannot see her without loving her. . . . It is incomprehensible, how she can be so unhappy and yet so friendly and good. . . . There is not another such heart in this world," says the sturdy, active landlady of the post station.

Cäcilie is as different from Stella as Friederike from Lili. She has the same good-heartedness, the same high sentiments, and yet she is inferior, narrower, more modest. Not only does she not complain of her husband, who has left her in the lurch, but, what is more, she pardons him. "He needed more than my love . . . finally I came to be nothing to him but an honest housewife, most earnestly devoted to him and endeavouring to please him and care for him, sacrificing all my days to the welfare of my home and child, and obliged to occupy my mind with so many trifles that I was no longer an entertaining companion, and he, with the sprightliness of his mind, could not but find my society dull." She is willing without further ado to give him up in favour of Stella. She will be satisfied with his friendship and his letters. As she is a mature woman and has passed through many trials—she has now been married to Fernando for seventeen or eighteen years—Goethe was obliged to blend with his youthful prototype some features of riper age, which he may have borrowed from Friederike's mother or Johanna Fahlmer.

The figure of Fernando is the axis about which the play revolves. That Goethe sat for it himself is too evident to need special proof. He has even retained his own brown locks and black eyes. But the best side of himself, his manly character, he withheld. Fernando is neither a Don Juan, who in reckless cold blood sacrifices one wife after another to his sensual desire, nor a Goethe, who fights back his insidious, boundless passions before they accomplish irreparable injury, before they put him under indissoluble obligations. Fernando is a weakly woman's hero, nothing more. Whereas Goethe said of Clavigo, who so nearly resembles Fernando in moral constitution, that he was half-great, half-insignificant, Fernando himself is wholly insignificant, wholly despicable. He has not, as Clavigo, been a traitor in a single instance; he is guilty of double and threefold treachery; not merely to one woman he loves, but to two wives, and not alone to these, but to his children as well; nor does he leave his wives and children under the protection of their relatives, as Clavigo does Marie under the care of her married sister; he leaves them without any protection and among strangers. He runs away without the least assurance that his flight will not cast his wife and children into misery and want. Whereas his desertion of Cäcilie was bad enough, his treachery to Stella was monstrous, for she had sacrificed everything for him,— family, home, friends, happy circumstances, even her social honour. To be sure, he attempts to throw a pleasing cloak about his treachery to Stella by asserting that he has gone away to seek out Cäcilie, his first wife, about whom his conscience has been troubling him constantly. But we have as little faith in this reason as did the agent in the later version of the play, who is devoted to Fernando, body and soul. For, if this was the sole reason, why did not Fernando return when he failed to find Cäcilie? Why did he prefer to go to the Corsican war as a hireling? And why, after all, did he return again to Stella at the close of the war? If he went to the Corsican war because he wanted to rid himself of life, why did he not make a further attempt in another war?

Or had his dissatisfaction with life vanished so quickly in the war? Had he perhaps now grown weary, not of life, but of hardships, and did he wish to seek a little recreation from these hardships in the soft arms of his Stella, and, in course of time, when rest should become tedious, run off again and perhaps forget Cäcilie and Stella in the arms of a third mistress? We expect this of him and hence do not understand how the women, after all their experience with him, can still be willing to live with him, and can still labour under the delusion that he will from now on remain a faithful husband to them. The nobler and purer their natures the more they should have been terrified and indignant on discovering that the man of whom they held so high an opinion was a miserable traitor, a pitiful swaggerer, who had deceived himself and them by his fine words; that he, who on their bosoms poured out the sorrows of a whole world, was utterly without sympathy for the sufferings of those nearest him. The more beautiful the illusion had been the more distorted the reality must have appeared. If Fernando had at least, like Clavigo, been full of great projects, if seductive ambitions had driven him away from the family threshold, the women could have excused his evil past and hoped for a pure and noble future when ambition should have vanished in smoke or been satisfied. Every truly great ambition makes for reconciliation. Not so in the case of Fernando. We are told, it is true (in the first version), that he has forsaken Cäcilie in order to avoid stifling his powers and standing in the way of his own future greatness. But after he gains freedom of action what does he do with his powers, with his great soul, with which the poet elsewhere accredits him? He enters into another *liaison*, dallies away five years with his mistress in a beautiful castle, then goes out again into the world, plays soldier, and returns home to sweet idleness. Falling the victim a second time of such an unmanly weakling, merely on the strength of his bewitching eyes and voice and his sentimental words, we can understand, perhaps, in an Elvira, but not in such deep, serious characters as Cäcilie and

Stella. One of two things the poet ought to have done: he ought either to have made Fernando greater, or the women less great. As the characters now stand, the happy solution of the first version, the double marriage, is an impossibility. It is most impossible for Stella, who is the stronger character and has been the more grievously deceived. Goethe recognised this in his old age and made Stella take poison and Fernando shoot himself.

This change, however, removed only the worst outgrowth, not the evil itself, which arises from the character of Fernando. He is supposed to be a man, but is not. He has the power neither of virtue nor of vice. He has no will, he has only whims. No strong instinct, no great passion rules him. Without will, without rudder, he drifts hither and thither. We can endure such an unmanly man in a secondary rôle as a foil to set off a real man, but as the chief character he is intolerable, because he is half-tedious and half-odious. If an actor would make the rôle effective—we have never seen one who succeeded in doing so—he would have to contribute more to it than the poet did.

Goethe made the same blunder in this character that he did in some others for which he took himself as the model: for example, Eridon in *Die Laune des Verliebten*. He took a phase of his own character, magnified its weak side, and, in the union of author and model, forgot to add what was needed for the sake of completeness.

Aside from the unsuccessful figure of Fernando, the art of characterisation is admirable. The delicate shading in the two equally good and equally unhappy wives belongs to the best that ever poet's hand created. Of the great number of beauties in the play we may here call attention to one only, Stella's soliloquy in the fifth act, an exquisite monodrama, in which all the chords of a loving heart that has been unspeakably deceived resound with most noble and most thrilling tones. Noteworthy also is the concentration of the action, which surpasses even that of *Clavigo*. It all takes place within the space of one day.

The play, which was not published till the end of January, 1776, created a great sensation, especially because of the ending. Four pirated editions appeared within a single week. Goethe sent a copy to Lili with these touching verses:

Im holden Tal, auf ſchneebedeckten Höhen
War ſtets dein Bild mir nah;
Ich ſah's um mich in lichten Wolken wehen,
Im Herzen war mir's da.
Empfinde hier, wie mit allmächt'gem Triebe
Ein Herz das andre zieht,
Und daß vergebens Liebe
Vor Liebe flieht.*

Well could he dedicate it to her, for *Stella* [57] is the apotheosis of Lili.

Beside the two light operas, *Erwin und Elmire* and *Claudine von Villa Bella*, which he later completely recast, Goethe finished no other drama in Frankfort; he produced, however, a series of precious fragments. To these belong *Faust* and *Egmont*. As they will be considered farther on, we shall here merely cast a glance at those which were not destined to reach maturity.

The oldest among them is *Cäsar*, which unfortunately has all, except a few lines, been lost. The subject had occupied the poet's mind back in Strasburg. It seems to have been his purpose at that time, much as in *Götz*, to weave together dramatically the most prominent points in the life of the hero. Later he discarded this idea as unartistic, and limited himself to the moment of greatest dramatic interest, Cæsar's death. But this gave rise to other difficulties. From the beginning he had given Cæsar his full sympathy,

* In lovely vale, on peak of snowy white
Thy form was everywhere;
I saw it drifting in the mist-clouds light;
Within my heart, 't was there.
Know thou by this, with what resistless might
A yearning heart is fraught:
When love shuns love by flight
'T is all for naught.

because he had found in the hero many traits of his own character. This of necessity lowered the assassins in his favour and debased them in the play. In a line of his diary, written in Strasburg, they are called "good-for-nothing fellows," and four years later he declared to Bodmer that they were villains. But a play in which all the light should fall on Cæsar and all the shade on the conspirators was so contrary to the spirit of an age in which even young counts thundered against tyrants, that Goethe could, with perfect certainty, take it for granted that his play would fail to win favour, especially in the circles he cared most about. Hence he writes, on the 1st of June, 1774, to Schönborn, that his *Cäsar* [58] will not please his friends. But the very thing he feared his friends would feel he felt himself in many an hour. As soon as he got rid of the burden of the Cæsarean genius he was under the spell of Brutus's pure, undaunted spirit of liberty, which explains his lapidary panegyrics on the two in Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*. This wavering, which must of necessity have led to a repetition of the Shakespearian work, wrecked the play.

*Mahomet* did not progress much farther than *Cäsar*. The beginnings go back to the year 1772. In this play, again, the chief moments of the life of a great spirit—rise, struggle, victory, and death—were to pass before us in dramatic pictures. As a general motive the poet had in mind to depict all the power that genius is able to exert over men through character and intellect. But when he met Lavater and Basedow in the summer of 1774 the general motive was specialised to the thought that the superior man would like to spread abroad the divine influence which he feels within him. But then he comes into contact with the rough world, and, in order to influence it, has to descend to its level; but by so doing he compromises his superior qualities in great measure and finally loses them altogether. The heavenly and the eternal are incorporated in the body, controlled by earthly purposes, and carried away with it to a transitory fate.

But the drama, even with this new infiltration of realism, apparently never advanced beyond hasty sketches. The few elaborated scenes which have come down to us belong to the earlier period, among them also the richly coloured symbolic hymn to the triumph of genius, *Mahomets Gesang*, originally an amœbæum between Ali and Fatime in honour of their master at the height of his success.

*Prometheus* attained to fuller maturity, because in it Goethe's heart was more involved. Prometheus is Götz magnified to Titanic proportions. This Titan, puffed up with self-assurance and power, defies even the gods. He is bound by no gratitude. He has rescued himself from the hardest struggles and greatest dangers by his own strength. What the gods did for him they did for themselves. He feels himself their peer, for he can create as well as they. His realm extends as far as the sphere of his activity. What though this be small, he is nevertheless lord over it. He has no need of the gods even to give life to his creatures; for through his genius (Minerva) he has a share in the world-spirit, who rules the gods as well as him, and through this spirit his creatures receive life. It makes no difference to him that he must suffer pain. He finds within himself the power to dry his tears, and does not hate life because not all dreams that blossom reach maturity. Thus he, the life-loving, fate-hardened world-conqueror stands in striking contrast to life-hating, weak, world-fleeing Werther. In *Prometheus* the poet celebrated his victory over the Werther moods to which he was, for the time being, subject. We hear his fondness for life and enjoyment of creation, when Prometheus, happy and proud in the midst of his creatures, cries: "Here is my world, my all! Here I feel myself, all my wishes in corporeal forms. My spirit so thousandfold divided and yet one in my dear children." But the most perfect of his creatures is love, Pandora. In her he has incorporated everything that has quickened and refreshed him under the wide heaven and upon the boundless earth. By radiating love and being borne up by it he becomes most like a god. Goethe

thus gives the old fable an original and highly poetical turn.

*Prometheus* originated in 1773, the year in which Goethe began to study Spinoza. It is a document of this study. That for which Goethe had been prepared by the teachings of antiquity, and by Giordano Bruno, and which the mystics of the Storm-and-Stress period, Hamann and Herder, had developed into a precious faith, was established in his mind as a certainty by Spinoza: God and the world are one, and every individual is a part of the world-divinity. From this standpoint he could not admit that gods have a nature different from the human, are subject to special laws, and superior to man. Neither could happiness consist in submission to the gods; it must consist solely in being in harmony with the divine universe, into which state one must seek to enter by means of creation and love.

Goethe did not carry the play beyond two short acts. The well-known powerful soliloquy, which he later included among his poems under the title *Prometheus*,[59] was probably intended to open the second act, the awakening of human life, and the present second scene was to be moved forward. Lessing became acquainted with the soliloquy as early as 1780, through Fritz Jacobi, and was pleased to note the Spinozism expressed in it. This gave rise later to a heated controversy over Lessing's Spinozism, which made the poem famous also from an historical point of view. Why the play was not completed is easily understood. It was not merely because in Goethe's poetic forest the trees grew so close to one another that one took away light and air from the other: it was hard for the poet to find a solution to satisfy himself. The burden of thought was too much in conflict with the realistic form, and for a symbolic solution the young poet was not yet prepared.

The fragment, with its unrhymed *vers irréguliers* and noble diction, is radiant with the morning glow of the youth of mankind, which suffuses even the Titanic defiance with its soft, blending tones.

Beside the serious, our poet also gave wide range to the

humorous in his productions during the years in Frankfort. And, again, it was almost exclusively the dramatic form which he selected for these merry children of his muse. We have already made the passing acquaintance of some of these productions. The two most clever of the period are still to be mentioned: *Satyros*, or *The Deified Sylvan Devil*, and *Hanswursts Hochzeit*. These deserve a little more attention than the others.

*Satyros*, which probably originated in 1773, has the following plot: A hermit, weary of the tedious folly of city people, has moved out into God's free nature, and a satyr comes to him with a sorely wounded leg. Though kindly received, the latter has none but abusive words for the loving care bestowed upon him, scolds about anything and everything, and takes advantage of the momentary absence of his benefactor to throw the hermit's crucifix into the water and steal from him a valuable piece of linen. Then he hobbles back into the woods and with lovely soft singing and playing on the flute entices to him the maidens Arsinoë and Psyche. While the beautiful song does not make Arsinoë forget the long ears and unkempt hair of the satyr, Psyche is completely intoxicated and raves over his divinely sublime face. Satyros notes her devotion to him and with clever eagerness seeks to enjoy the sweet fruit of it. While Arsinoë goes to fetch her father, Hermes, to see the remarkable man, Satyros makes a fawning declaration of his love to Psyche, which brings the maiden, dissolved in bliss, into his arms to receive his smacking kisses. Immediately afterward Arsinoë returns with Hermes. Satyros replies to the words of welcome by scoffing at Hermes's garment and beard, and, boasting of his own nakedness and ungainliness, launches out into an impassioned description of the condition of primeval man, in which state alone, "free from the burden of accumulated trifles," one may feel what it is to live. A great crowd of people has gathered during the speech, and when he has ended with the words, "The tree becomes a tent, the grass a carpet, the raw chestnut a lordly feast," the people join in and shout:

"Raw chestnuts! Son of Jupiter! Raw chestnuts! Ours the world!" At once the new food is eaten in the forest and Satyros accompanies the meal with a sermon, composed of ancient Greek philosophemes, concerning the beginning of the world. As nobody understands him, everybody is the more firmly convinced that the new prophet is a god. They fall on their knees and worship him. Psyche is about to expire for joy. At this moment the hermit comes running up and attacks the god, calling him an ill-bred, noxious beast, because he has ungratefully stolen his linen and crucifix. The people, enraged at this blasphemy, are about to stone him, and it is only with great difficulty that Hermes succeeds in commuting an immediate execution to a later solemn sacrifice. Till then the hermit is to be locked up in his lodge. Hermes's shrewd wife, Eudora, has meanwhile become well aware of Satyros's true nature, and decides to employ a ruse to unmask him and at the same time save the hermit. She entices Satyros into the temple, and just as the hermit is about to be sacrificed she screams for help. Hermes breaks open the doors of the temple, and Eudora is seen defending herself against the audacious embraces of Satyros. The people, horrified, cry: "A beast, a beast!" while Satyros cold-bloodedly and contemptuously says:

Ich tät euch Eseln eine Ehre an,
Wie mein Vater Jupiter vor mir getan;
Wollt eure dummen Köpf belehren
Und euren Weibern die Mücken wehren,
Die ihr nicht gedenkt, ihnen zu vertreiben;
So mögt ihr denn im Dreck bekleiben.
Ich zieh' meine Hand von euch ab,
Lasse zu edlern Sterblichen mich herab.*

* You asses I did an honour show,
As my father Jupiter long ago;
I wished to open your stupid eyes,
And protect your ladies from the flies,
Which you neglected to drive away;
So henceforth in squalor you wallow may.
No more to you shall I succour lend;
To nobler mortals I 'll condescend.

There have been many conjectures as to who is meant in this satire, written with the "divine boldness of youth," and the names of Basedow, Kaufmann, Heinse, and Klinger have all been suggested. But after Wilhelm Scherer's arguments there can hardly be any further doubt that it refers to Herder, as the Court circles in Weimar pointed out, and as Psyche, the poetical surname of his fiancée, clearly shows. Herder's habit of wounding the feelings of even his benefactors by his morose and bitter criticism; his two-fold nature in which Orphic fancy and rude cynicism, ethereal sentimentalism and sensual desire, were to be found side by side, are excellently characterised. And for the very reason that Herder strove to envelop his animal passions, which he as well as other human beings possessed, in a cloud of affected heavenly feelings, the temptation was all the greater for Goethe to caricature him as above. Furthermore, Herder, as a disciple of Rousseau, was a believer in a free, natural life. As such, and as an admirer of antiquity, he considered that clothing disfigures man. He was also a convincing preacher, whether he spoke intelligibly or unintelligibly, in a large or small circle, to men or women. Finally, Herder was widely travelled and had doubtless everywhere won fiery admirers, especially among the women. Hence Goethe, in the passage of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* where he cautiously indicates the model for Satyros, could speak of him as the ruder and more excellent of those fellows who anchored in every city and sought to gain influence, at least in a few families. Furthermore, we must not forget that Goethe, as well as Merck, whom we must imagine as having had a share in the origin of the farce, either by actual work or by suggestions, knew a great deal more about young Herder than we do; that they understood him and explained him to themselves, especially in the years from 1771 to 1775, differently and more correctly than we of to-day, who look upon him as the Weimar superintendent-general [of the Lutheran church] and the author of profound and serious works. It may be that very definite scenes which occurred,

either among his male friends, or among the women of Darmstadt, had their influence. At the same time we must remember that the exaggerations and distortions of caricature are the necessary accompaniments of satire, and that *Satyros* was written, not for publication, but only for the private amusement of the poet and some few friends, and that every composition, once born, has its independent life by virtue of which it transcends its immediate occasion. Hence it is a mistake to raise objections to the reference of Satyros to Herder on the ground of details which have no correspondence in reality.

In *Satyros* he also attacked the then very common mingling of the prophetic with the grossly sensual and material, as well as the extravagant deification of nature and the natural. And here the poet has indulged freely in roguish self-criticism. He bestowed upon the little work an especial charm in the wealth of rhythmic forms. Iambic, trochaic, dactylic, anapestic rhythms, short and long lines, light doggerel and dignified, inspiring verse alternate in most spritely variation, the form always corresponding to the thought.

Of unequal eminence, but still more wanton and audacious is *Hanswursts Hochzeit.* It is the vulgar, comic counterpart to *Werther*, as *Prometheus* was the sublime and serious. Goethe treats the material with all the *sans-gêne* and startling plainness of speech of the older German carnival plays, and retains their loose couplets. In Hanswurst's world there is no delicacy of feeling. One becomes accustomed to everything, even the commonest and the vilest things. Cousins Schuft (Scamp) and Schurke (Rascal) are invited to the wedding, as well as other dirty male and female companions; for they belong to the family. The right of existence is unconditionally respected. Hanswurst, who is not disturbed by any moral or physical repulsiveness in the world, or in the wedding guests, has, however, one pain, viz., that by the elaborate wedding festivities he is deprived of the possession of his Ursel Blondine longer than he likes. For he is a plain, matter-of-fact

man, and cannot endure any formalities that hinder the full and immediate development of all his powers, which is the true aim of life. "I am cut out of a whole block," he says proudly. This makes him in the poet's mind a robust champion of unvarnished naturalness against conventional appearance (an honest, simple Satyros) and at the same time a parody on Werther, who stands on the same ground, from which he, however, strives upward toward high ideals, which Wurstel ridicules as the vapourings of a woman. In the play itself Kilian Brustfleck, the guardian and tutor of Hanswurst, is contrasted with him. He is the representative of that class which pays attention chiefly to appearances. He is unhappy that with all his moral and political sweat he has been unable to cast this spirit of uncultivated, primeval man out of Wurstel. He will allow him to be anything, if only he will appear to be polite. What the further course of the wedding was cannot be made out from the few fragments that have come down to us, and Goethe's sketch in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The unusually large number of characters in the play would have made it possible to turn upon the most varied conditions, ideas, and men the lantern of the merry scoffer. But he soon discarded the subject as too broad and too vulgar. If the play had been completed we should possess a comedy little inferior to those of Aristophanes in wit, and superior to them in bold licence.

# XIX

## THE WEIMAR COURT OF THE MUSES

**Weimar in 1775—Anna Amalia—Wieland—Knebel—Count Goertz—Minister von Fritsch—The chamberlains—Musäus—Bertuch—Kraus—Duchess Luise—Charlotte von Stein—Fräulein von Göchhausen—Baroness von Werthern—Countess von Werthern—Corona Schröter—Frau Schardt—Karl August: his artistic sense, poetic temperament, idealism, love of nature, simplicity, and originality, hatred of Court formalities, liberality, progressiveness—Weimar the centre of German culture—The youthful Court—Its significance for Goethe.**

TUESDAY, November 7, 1775, before the break of day, Goethe arrived in Weimar. If he had thought of anything more than a passing visit his heart would perhaps have sunk within him on his arrival in the dark, quiet country town.[60] The six thousand inhabitants of the Thuringian capital led a miserable, sleepy life. There was no trade and no industry to bring prosperity and life. Apart from the crumbs that fell from the Court table agriculture was the only source of living. In the morning the town herdsman called together all the live stock with his horn and in the evening drove the beasts back through the dirty, ill-smelling streets. At most hours of the day the town seemed deserted; at best one saw here and there an idler sunning himself in front of his door, or some one from Court riding or driving through the streets. No tide of commerce entered this haven. The mails were few and irregular, for the city lay off the great post-road leading from Frankfort to Leipsic. A wall with four gates enclosed the few hundred little houses, above which towered

church, town hall, and a few of the more stately government buildings. The most stately of these, the castle, had for a year and a half lain in ashes, which increased the desolate appearance of the place. The natural environs, too, offered little relief to the sad picture. The narrow Ilm wound its way modestly along the eastern side through a valley of meadows, extending between rolling hills covered with cultivated fields, pastures, and woodland.

Hither came Goethe from what might, for that time, be considered a great and busy city, whose proud cathedral cast its reflection in a broad river teeming with boats, while all about lay a wreath of orchards and vineyards, where the breezes were gentler than here in this hilly region.

And yet this little corner of Thuringia became infinitely dear to him. Everything else which he may have missed was more than compensated for by the influential position which he occupied, and by the circle of select people into which he was received. If on his arrival the intellectual culture of the city had revealed itself to him by some magic radiation of light he would have been as pleasantly astonished, as is the wanderer nowadays, when, through the darkness of evening, he suddenly sees the glow of electric lights shining out of the little brown wooden huts of an Alpine village. This culture was less famous for great products than for a noble, free humanity, such as was by no means common in Germany and at a prince's court was almost unique. It was brought into being by the mother of the Duke, Anna Amalia.

The Milanese honoured Duke Karl August, on his visit in 1817, by having a commemorative medal struck with the inscription, "*il principe uomo.*" The same simple and yet incomparably illustrious title might with equal fitness have been conferred upon his mother. And indeed she did receive it from the one most worthy to bestow it. Goethe, who had the rare gift of expressing the quintessence of a personality in a few words, called her a "perfect princess with a perfectly human spirit." In a similar

manner Wieland characterises her as one of the most amiable and most glorious combinations of humanity, womanliness, and princeliness. When Goethe entered Weimar this distinguished princess was only thirty-six years of age, but her past life had been serious, and rich in accomplishment. By birth a Brunswick princess, niece of Frederick the Great, of whom she was a perfect image, her youth, spent at her father's noisy Court, brought no years of joy to her, for the family did not love her. She had hardly entered upon her seventeenth year when she was married off, "as princesses usually are." The husband chosen for her was the sickly eighteen-year-old Duke Konstantin of Saxe-Weimar. After they had been married two years he died.

Under the most trying circumstances this princess, scarcely more than a child, who in the two short years had become the mother of two sons, was obliged to assume the regency of a country still suffering from the painful consequences of the careless government during the minority of Duke Konstantin, as well as from the effects of the Seven Years' War. Yet, guided by her own clear understanding and sound feelings, for in the beginning she had no Council worthy of mention, she wielded the sceptre with astonishing assurance, and represented the interests of the little state in every quarter clearly and firmly. To be sure, she often had hours of sore trial, when, as we know from her confessions, she wrestled with herself to find the right path, and often she, who was later so serene and apparently so sceptical, sought strength for her tasks in fervent prayer. It was in her favour that her powers were spurred on by a noble ambition, kindled by the glory of her Brunswick relatives, Frederick's victorious generals. As she could not hope to win laurels in battle she sought them with all the greater zeal on the field of peace; not merely in a material sense, by striving to spread abroad order and prosperity, but still more in a spiritual sense, by opening her country to a higher culture and refinement. In this connection we observe a remarkable phenomenon. Not only did this

KARL AUGUST
(From Heinemann's *Goethe*)

woman, who had grown up at a stiff, ceremonious Court, develop the freest and most natural humanity, but she also, in spite of the fact that she had breathed in her childhood home an atmosphere part Italian and part French, and all her life long wrote French more frequently and more fluently than German, became a pronounced patroness and partisan of German literature.

Her endeavours to promote the intellectual life of the country came into notice immediately after the war, as did in general the larger development of her graceful spirit, and her patronage of the muses. She brought the University of Jena into greater prominence by increasing its income and by calling and retaining sound scholars for its faculty. She provided the Ducal Library in Weimar with its own beautiful, permanent home, in the so-called Green Palace, and opened it to general use. Musical life she raised from its low mechanical state to a high artistic plane by the engagement of thorough artists and the fostering of good music. Hand in hand with this went her efforts to secure for the theatre in Weimar regular and dignified performances. To this end she engaged, in 1768, Koch's excellent troupe, and, in 1771, Seyler's still more famous company, which contained such stars of the first magnitude as Eckhof and Frau Hensel. She made great sacrifices to carry out this plan because she was convinced, as Wieland said in 1773, "that a well-ordered theatre contributed in no small measure to the unconscious bettering and beautifying of the ideas, sentiments, taste, and morals of a people." Hence, we are told, she was not satisfied, when in this way she had provided her Court with the most respectable entertainment, people of business with the noblest recreation from the duties of their callings, and the leisure class with the most harmless pastime; it was also her desire that the lower classes should not be excluded from a public amusement which would be for them a school of good manners and virtuous sentiments. "And thus Weimar enjoys an advantage which it has cause to be grateful for, and which no other city in Germany can boast: it has a German

theatre which everybody can attend three times a week free of charge." Unfortunately Weimar did not enjoy this advantage long; for with the burning of the palace, the theatre, too, which had occupied a part of it, passed away. For years thereafter Thalia's delights were secured to a small circle by the Ducal Amateur Theatre, which the Duchess took under her special patronage, and for which she prepared charming stages in her favourite retreats.

In engen Hütten und im reichen Saal,
Auf Höhen Ettersburgs, in Tiefurts Tal,
Im leichten Zelt, auf Teppichen der Pracht
Und unter dem Gewölb' der hohen Nacht.*

We have already mentioned the name of Wieland, through whose appointment the Duchess laid the foundation of Weimar's hegemony in the most flourishing period of German literature. She had become acquainted with him, and with his didactic novel, *Der goldene Spiegel*, which dealt with the education of princes and the constitution of states. After that, despite the very bold opinions which he therein expressed concerning Court life, the duties of a ruler, and the relation between prince and people, or, perhaps, because of them, Wieland seemed to her a suitable governor for her sons, Karl August and Konstantin, but especially for the Crown Prince, and she sedulously removed every hindrance in the way of his being called to the position. He came to assume the new duties in September, 1772. To be sure, Wieland, as an educator, did not satisfy the expectations of the Princess, but she was all the more pleased with his amiable, coquettishly graceful poetry, always brilliant with cheerful colours; indeed, she doubtless preferred it to the deeper and more serious poetry of Goethe and Schiller. This may account for her particularly cordial intellectual intercourse with Wieland, lasting till her death,

* In crowded huts and in sumptuous hall,
On heights of Ettersburg, in Tiefurt's dale,
On carpets splendid, in pavilions light,
And under the vault of solemn night.

in 1807, and including even the reading together of the comedies of Aristophanes.

When Wieland had been in Weimar for two years Anna Amalia made another appointment, likewise very characteristic of her. Prince Konstantin wished to devote himself to the military service. An educated officer was sought to prepare him for this calling and was found in Lieutenant Karl Ludwig von Knebel. For ten years he had been with the Prussian Guard in Potsdam and had done his whole duty as a soldier. But neither the service, nor the usual passions of an officer had satisfied his inner longings. The tall Lieutenant of the Guard possessed a gentle, meditative soul, which Uz, an old family friend in Ansbach, had early turned to poetry, and which had developed a tendency to pessimism by the reading of Young's *Night Thoughts*. When he returned to his quarters from the drill grounds or the watchhouse he would translate from Horace and Vergil, compose German, and at times also Latin, odes, hymns, and elegies, and write letters to his literary friends: Ramler, Nicolai, and Anna Luise Karsch in Berlin, Gleim and Jacobi in Halberstadt, or Boie in Göttingen. For, as he wrote his friend Gilbert after eight years of service, a life without the muses seemed to him the culmination of sadness, while to consecrate to the muses something of his own every day was the greatest joy. Eight years made this visionary, poetising officer tired of the garrison duty in Potsdam, which held him "involuntarily in admiration and fear of the great king." He resigned and returned home via Weimar, where he wished to make the acquaintance of Wieland, of whom he had so long been an admirer. On this occasion he was presented to the Duchess and to Minister von Fritsch, who were soon agreed that he was the man qualified for the further education of Prince Konstantin. In October, 1774, he became military instructor to the Prince. The society of Weimar received in him one of its most valuable members. A profound and good soul, filled with a genuine love of nature, science, and poetry; a clever observer of the world and of men; distrustful of himself, for which reason he

could advise others better than himself; "a wise sulker," and yet not a spoiler of others' mirth; quiet and peaceable, and although an intimate friend of the best people and those highest in authority, wholly without vanity and ambition.

How little he allowed his mind to become fettered by habit, and how open he remained to everything new, in as far as it was great, was illustrated by his bearing toward Goethe. He, whose favourite poet had been smooth, pathetic Ramler, and who had felt benefited by the cool, rationalistic air of Berlin, turned with enthusiasm to Goethe after the appearance of *Götz* and *Werther*, and made use of the first opportunity to come into closer touch with him.

A third princes' governor who played a certain rôle in the first years after Goethe's arrival was Count Goertz, who later distinguished himself as Prussian Ambassador at important posts. His position with the princes was much older, and, at the same time, higher than that of Wieland and Knebel. Educated at the Universities of Leyden and Strasburg, he had been chosen, when but twenty-five years of age, by the Duchess as governor of her sons. As to his talents and wide knowledge Weimar opinion was unanimous, but as to his character opinions differed. A number of persons of importance judged him very unfavourably. And, indeed, if we examine his conduct in Weimar, we discover the picture of a clever, calculating diplomat, who knew how to conceal his egotistical aims and impulses beneath the airs of a *bel esprit*, who flattered all who could be of use to him, and was complaisant to everybody in public, while in private he intrigued against every one who was not in sympathy with his nature and interests. Duchess Amalia and Wieland, at first very devoted to him, later despised him. The former also accused him of having thoroughly spoiled Karl August, and it greatly displeased her that her daughter-in-law made him her Lord Steward, in which position he remained in Weimar till the end of 1777.

Of entirely different stamp was Amalia's chief servant, the president of the Privy Council, Minister von Fritsch, with whom Goethe was to enter into closest official rela-

tions. Son of the scholarly, far-seeing statesman, Minister von Fritsch, of the Electorate of Saxony, excellently prepared for the administrative service by Count von Bünau, vice-regent in Eisenach, a close acquaintance of Winckelmann, at that time the Count's librarian in Nöthnitz, he had early attracted the attention of the Duchess, and gradually became her most faithful and valued councillor. At the same time his personality was by no means agreeable to princes. In a letter to Karl August he himself confessed that he had too much roughness in his manners, too much seriousness, often bordering on moroseness, too much inflexibility, and too little consideration for prevalent tastes, to be able to make a pleasing impression at Court. This self-characterisation is confirmed by Goethe, who says of him that he had nothing easy or refined in his manners and was apparently harsh and stiff. Goethe adds "apparently" advisedly, for, in reality, this man had a tender heart which he often manifested in a way that did him great honour. He was further noted for a lively interest in education, a clear understanding, unwavering love of truth, honour, unselfishness, and industry, and an exactness in the performance of his duties that bordered on pedantry. For the sake of such virtues Amalia and Karl August were willing to overlook the corners and edges of his nature; for they were obliged to admit that the peculiarities of the man which were unpleasant to them were most closely related to his agreeable qualities.

A more cheerful figure at the Weimar Court was the chamberlain, Hildebrand von Einsiedel, who by his great cordiality won the nickname of "l'ami," and was an indispensable member of the social circle. He composed neat pasquinades and operettas, was an actor, a musician, a master at billiards, loved cards, and was ready for any merry prank. He was proverbially absent-minded, and over his music would forget any engagement or invitation. But back of these brilliant social qualities there was a sterling character, which was early appreciated, as is shown by his appointment as associate justice of the Superior Court

in Jena. As president of this Superior Court, which was later changed to the Supreme Appellate Court, he developed a varied literary activity and lived to a ripe old age.

Among the younger members of the Court circle at the time of Goethe's arrival were: Chamberlain von Kalb (it was he who escorted Goethe to Weimar), intellectual and clever, but insincere; Head Forester von Wedel, usually called "der schöne Wedel," "a frank fellow and a good hunter," attractive because of his dry wit, the playmate of Karl August in early youth; and Chamberlain von Seckendorff, formerly lieutenant colonel in Sardinia, like Einsiedel a poet, translator, and composer, but superior to him in talent. Goethe has portrayed him vividly in *Ilmenau*,[61] with his long, finely shaped limbs, which in his ecstatic laziness he stretches out in all directions, while he with great fervour sings a monotonous song about the dance of the heavenly spheres.

Not belonging to the nobility, but yet closely associated with the Court, were Musäus and Bertuch.

Musäus, at first pages' tutor, then teacher in the Gymnasium, had originally studied theology, but had lost his parish by dancing in public. His droll humour stands out as prominently in his life as in his writings and on the amateur stage. He is still known by his *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*. Even before the publication of these tales he had acquired a literary reputation by his two satirical novels, *Grandison der Zweite* and *Physiognomische Reisen*. For the latter work Goethe gave him this rap on the fingers: "The muses say one thing, Musäus says another."

Bertuch, a native of Weimar, was a rare combination of scholarship, poetic talent, and commercial aptness. Originally a theologian, then a jurist, he received in 1775 the influential position of councillor and private secretary to the Duke, a position which gave him charge of the Duke's finances. He established his right to membership in the Court of the Muses by means of a collection of *Wiegenlieder* (1772), among which "A little lamb as white as snow" is still to-day the delight of German children, the tragedy

*Elfriede* (1773), a translation of *Don Quixote* (1775–1779), and many other writings. His later literary efforts were more of a commercial nature, among them the *Bilderbuch für Kinder*, which has become so popular. In the Bureau of National Industries his success was brilliant. As long as he was an officer at Court he was always busy, and there was no one who did not occasionally need his services. This developed in him a self-satisfied arrogance which grew more and more vexatious to Goethe, who was at first on intimate terms with him.

In the same group belongs the painter, and later director of the Weimar Institute of Drawing, Georg Melchior Kraus, a fellow-countryman of Goethe's, whose facile, pleasing talent had been cultivated in Paris. Goethe characterises him as a most agreeable social companion. "Even-tempered cheerfulness accompanied him everywhere; obliging ing without humility, dignified without pride, he was everywhere at home, everywhere a favourite, the busiest and, at the same time, most comfortable of all mortals."

If we mention in passing Travel Director von Klinkowström, Master of the Horse von Stein, Chamberlain von Werthern, Duchess Amalia's private secretary Ludecus, Director of the Orchestra Wolff, Chamber-musician Kranz, we have, with the exception of the Duke, exhausted the circle of men with whom Goethe came into immediate contact in Weimar.

In passing from the men to the women, we find, beside Duchess Amalia, the tender young Duchess Luise, consort of Karl August. She is almost completely crowded into the background by the masculine, active, brilliant personality of her mother-in-law. Her quiet nature was little suited to the Court of Weimar. Her tender heart took everything very hard. Every little offence and every discomfort vexed her and made her withdraw into herself. So it came about that because of her noble qualities she won everybody's respect, but, because of her bitter reserve, enjoyed nobody's friendship. Even Goethe, who after meeting her in Karlsruhe devoted to her a heart full of joyous love,

gradually became cold because of her infelicitous manner. This manner was still more repulsive to her aggressive husband, and their married life soon took on an unrefreshing aspect. "She shone as an eclipsed star," is Knebel's apt characterisation of her. Only in critical moments did this star flame forth; then her nature arose to heroic greatness. When the catastrophe of 1806 broke over the country she, by her firm, majestic bearing, saved Weimar from destruction and the ducal house from annihilation. "Voilà une femme à laquelle même nos deux cent canons n'ont pu faire peur!" said Napoleon to Rapp at the time.

Next to her, and in many respects resembling her, was Charlotte von Stein, wife of the Master of the Horse. As we shall have occasion to devote special attention to this eminent woman, suffice it here to allow her to shine out as a meteor, as her light once before quickly flashed before our eyes.

In contrast with the serious characters of the Duchess and Frau von Stein is the joyous, mischievous "little gnome," Luise von Göchhausen, lady in waiting to Duchess Amalia, with the nickname Thusnelda, a small, misshapen, sensible, good-natured mocker, of strong intellect and fine taste, as is best shown by her letters from Italy. "Plenty of genius, but can do nothing!" she said jokingly of herself. To her poetic interest and her admiration for Goethe we owe the preservation of the *Urfaust* and the booklet *Annette*, for which she will always be remembered.

Another piquant member of the society—but in a different sense—was Baroness Emilie von Werthern-Beichlingen, who grew up in London, as the daughter of the Hanoverian minister von Münchhausen, and in 1773 was married to Chamberlain von Werthern, who was considerably her elder. Sensuous, fiery, very beautiful, she lacked neither admirers nor the inclination to indulge their homage. With the most persevering of them, Lieutenant von Einsiedel, Councillor of Mines, and brother of Chamberlain von Einsiedel, she eloped to Africa in 1784, after having previously risked the adventure of a sham burial.

Of nobler type was the beautiful Countess Jeannette Luise von Werthern auf Neunheiligen, whom we here mention as a representative of the country gentry. Born Baroness von Stein, sister of the reformer of Prussia, aristocratic, very dainty, refined, soulful, and "most amiable," she was the woman from whom Goethe learned genteel manners. "She has in the art of living what in every art is called genius." Her copy in *Wilhelm Meister*, the Countess, bears uncommonly gentle features.

Goethe himself brought another "angel" to Weimar, when he had been there hardly a year, in the person of the actress and singer, Corona Schröter. He still retained pleasant memories of her from his Leipsic days, and when he saw her again in March, 1776, was all aflame, and in August induced Karl August to call her to Weimar as chamber singer. Of queenly Greek appearance,

> Als eine Blume zeigt ſie ſich der Welt,
> Zum Muſter wuchs das ſchöne Bild empor.
> Vollendet nun, ſie iſt's und ſtellt es vor.
> Es gönnten ihr die Muſen jede Gunſt,
> Und die Natur erſchuf in ihr die Kunſt.*

Wieland expressed himself no less strongly: "There [in the park] we found Goethe in company with the beautiful Corona Schröter, who in the infinitely noble Attic elegance of her whole figure, and in her quite simple, yet infinitely recherché and insidious costume, looked like the nymph of this charming grotto." "The muses did to her each grace impart." With an entrancing voice she combined great histrionic talent; she was a player and composer of music, and set, for example, Goethe's *Fischerin* (including the *Erlkönig*) to music; she painted with skill, as we can see by her portrait of herself as Iphigenia, which, with its rosy cheeks, lustrous, limpid eyes, and charming, senti-

* Unto the world she like a bloom appears,
Is beauty's model in its finished state.
She, perfect, doth perfection personate.
The muses did to her each grace impart,
And nature in her soul created art.

mental expression, inspires even us of to-day with a longing to see her. "Die Krone," as she was called ("And e'en thy name, Corona, graces thee") touched the hearts of many men, and in Goethe's she occupied a favoured spot for several years by the side of Frau von Stein. Einsiedel was for years passionately in love with her, and probably the only reason for their not being married was his hopeless financial ruin.

Her esteemed colleagues were the wife of Wolff, conductor of the orchestra, Frau Steinhardt, and Demoiselle Neuhauss, who were joined a few years later by Fräulein von Rudorff ("die Rudel"), who captured the "wise sulker," Knebel.

If we return to the "higher" regions, there is only one very prominent woman still to be mentioned, "little Frau Schardt," the wife of Frau von Stein's brother, Privy Councillor Schardt. Born Countess Bernstorff, after the early death of her parents she was brought up in the home of her cousin, the Danish Minister of State. There she had breathed the poetical air of humanity that prevailed in the Bernstorff household. After her marriage, in May, 1776, she was soon joined by her foster-mother and the latter's business agent, the portly Bode, Lessing's friend. As a follower of Klopstock she showed more inclination for Herder's soul-felt prophesying than for Goethe's idealising realism. Herder on his part cultivated a very warm Platonic friendship with the sentimental and somewhat complacent little woman. Finally we may mention further Duchess Luise's Mistress of the Robes, the long-nosed, stiff Countess Gianini; her ladies in waiting, von Wöllwart and von Waldner; young Frau von Kalb, Lady of the Bedchamber to Duchess Amalia; the widow of Legation Councillor Kotzebue, mother of the well-known author; and her amiable daughter Amalie.

At the head of this great, varied circle of men and women stood Karl August, into whose hands his mother, the Duchess Amalia, had given over the reins of government on the third day of September, 1775.

GOETHE'S HOUSE AT WEIMAR
(From Könnecke's *Bilderatlas*)

Next to Frederick II. of Prussia, Karl August was without question the greatest prince in Germany. Goethe says of him that he was born a great man. The Prussian King said of him at the age of fourteen: "I have never yet seen a young man of his age who gave grounds for such great hopes," while Wieland found in the fifteen-year-old boy all of the qualities out of which fate is accustomed to make great men. "Heaven grant," he added, "that he may not become too great for the welfare of his country!"

It was indeed a gross absurdity that this great Prince was destined to rule over a diminutive country, which, with its 733 square miles, offered such a tiny field for the exploitation of his desire for great achievements. Yet this very limitation became a source of blessing; for as his pent-up energy could not be fully expended on material and tangible things he was the more compelled to seek in the intellectual sphere the recognition to which his powers entitled him. And so he continued the work of his mother in most brilliant fashion. In this undertaking he was aided by the liberal education which he had acquired in order to satisfy the deep longings of his heart, not for the sake of making a fine appearance, as is so often the case with princes. Despising every kind of hollow show, he wished to appear to be only what he was: in fact he, like Goethe, enjoyed appearing to be less than he was.

"In everything I did," says Goethe, "he took a thorough interest." This indicates his attitude toward poetry, art, and the natural sciences. His knowledge of the natural sciences grew in time to be so thorough and extensive as to astonish even an Alexander von Humboldt. His love of art was manifested in his zeal in making collections and in giving support to artists, as well as in the genuine pleasure which the beauty in meritorious works afforded him. "Day before yesterday Goethe gave me a couple of Elsheimers," he wrote to Merck in 1781, . . . "they are so dear to me that they almost never leave my side, must always stand beside my desk and inspire me with thoughts of beauty, when I am likely to be smoked too much at the

fiery forge of human life." Concerning the Sistine Madonna he wrote to Knebel in October, 1782: "My feelings in the presence of the Raphael which adorns the Dresden Gallery were not unlike those when one has climbed the whole day up to the summit of St. Gothard, passed through the Urner Loch, and now suddenly looks out upon the blooming green Urseren Tal. As often as I looked at it and then turned away it seemed to me like a vision before my soul; even the most beautiful Correggios were to me only human pictures, and my memory of them, like their beautiful forms, sensibly palpable. But Raphael always remained with me merely as a breath, as one of those visions which the gods send to us in womanly form to make us happy or unhappy, as the images which come to us in our dreams, in waking hours and in sleep, and which, once seen, gaze at us continually, day and night, and stir our deepest emotions."

To poetry he was almost as delicately responsive as he was to painting. He himself possessed a thoroughly poetic temperament, even though in later years it was less frequently manifested. On an evening in July, 1780, after a week's visit from the Duke of Gotha, he wrote from a hut in the park: "The day was quite extraordinarily beautiful, and the first free evening (for the Gothas left this morning) was a great joy to me. I stole about through the entrances to the 'kalte Küche' [part of the park] and was in such close communion with nature and so far away from earthly cares. Man is, after all, not intended for the miserable humdrum of business life; for one's soul never expands as when one thus watches the sun go down, the stars come out, and sees and feels the evening grow cooler, and this all so much for its own sake, and so little for the sake of men, and yet they enjoy it and that, too, so keenly that they think it is for them. I will bathe with the evening star and gain new life. . . .

"I went to the river's bank. The water was cold, for night lay already on its bosom. It seemed as if one were going down into the cool night. As I took my first step in, it was so pure, so like the darkness of night; up over the

hill beyond Upper Weimar came the full, red moon. It was so completely quiet. One could hear only Wedel's French horns from afar, and the quiet distance probably made me hear purer tones than issued from the instruments."

In such utterances one feels as if Goethe were speaking, and his spirit certainly did permeate his pupil. But what an affinity of spirits was required to give back such a brilliant reflection!

We can recognise the Duke's poetic and, at the same time, idealistic temperament still more clearly in a remarkable letter which he directed to Knebel in October, 1781. Because Knebel could no longer serve the duchy in any tangible way in return for the salary which he was receiving he was thinking of seeking an appointment elsewhere. This occasioned a letter from the Duke, which, among other things, contained the following: "Are those, pray, who enjoy thy friendship, thy society, so slavish, are their needs so predominantly physical, that thou canst be of use to them only by digging, hoeing, cleaning out the stable, and scribbling documents? Is the receptacle of their souls so small that thou canst find no space in them into which thou canst pour the beautiful, good, and great things, which thy soul has treasured up, to better and ennoble their inner lives? Are we so hungry that thou must toil for our bread, so timid and unstable that thou must labour for our security? Are we incapable of other joys than those of the table and rest? Can we not find pleasure, if thou, freer from the dirt and foul odour of the world's machinery, devote thy whole time to the culling of bouquets from the flowers of life and presenting them to us, who have no time to gather them? Are our valleys so arid that we have no need of a lovely fountain to gather their tiny, trickling rills into a beautiful stream that we may enjoy them? Are we good for nothing but anvils of time and fate, and can we endure nothing about us but blocks which resemble us, and are of a hard and very durable texture? . . . The souls of men are like constantly cultivated soil; is it degrading to be a careful gardener, who spends his time in searching foreign lands for

different kinds of seeds, selecting and sowing them? Is it so short a task to procure and select this seed? Must he not at the same time ply his trade as a smith in order that he may well round out his life?" A man who can write thus is not merely a lover of poetry, he has poetry in him.

It is also a beautiful evidence of Karl August's poetic feeling that he prized Goethe's poetry above everything else. But, much as he admired it, his admiration did not make him uncritical. His judgment was always independent, and not infrequently very severe, for example, in the case of *Egmont*. It is in accordance with his sterling nature that in poetry he attached the greatest value to the substance, and that for works in which he thought he discovered empty pathos or straining for effect he showed an outspoken aversion. Many of Schiller's poems had to suffer under his strong disapproval.

His views, which embrace even peculiarities of style and rhythm, do not always coincide with ours. It is the most preposterous thing imaginable, however, to say that he had no understanding of poetry, merely because he thought little of a work of Goethe or Schiller, which to-day is celebrated, or because he esteemed one highly which to-day has fallen in value.

If after these amplifications it should appear as if Karl August were a delicately wrought personality, active only in spiritual things, this impression would be very deceptive. On the contrary, his nature was from the very beginning that of a hot-blooded, sturdy, sensuous huntsman and soldier. To grow weary from riding his hunting horses all day long over hedges and ditches, through rivers, and up into the mountains, and then camp at night under the open sky, was just to his fancy. Though his restlessness later subsided, his roughness and sturdiness clung to him, so that even in his advanced years he still retained something of his youthful frolicsomeness in intimate circles. This trait was still more clearly shown in his fondness for a joke, and in that he usually gave a rude one the preference.

Never did there dwell so closely together in the breast of

man two souls, the one of which clung with delight to low things, while the other soared to the realms of the gods. From the most insipid fun, the wildest pleasure, the most daring ride, the most noisy bustle of the day, he could pass immediately to the deepest, most serious, most refined things that stir our souls.

In keeping with the sturdiness of his nature was his love of simplicity and primitiveness. When he came to the throne the Ducal Palace was a heap of ashes. He calmly allowed fifteen years to pass by before he thought of rebuilding, and contented himself the while with the scantily appointed Fürstenhaus. Indeed its rooms were often too elegant for him, and he would move out and live for days and weeks in a little wooden cabin (called "Kloster" or "Borkenhäuschen") in the park, which nowadays seems fit only for a tool-house for garden implements.

He hated Court restraint and Court manners, and at his own Court he broke the rules of etiquette in every way and as often as he could. Once when he was for several days at the ceremonious Court of Brunswick he suffered downright agony. On that occasion Goethe said: "A fairy could do him no greater service than by transforming this palace into a charcoal-burner's hut." He dressed himself, too, as a plain burgher, with nothing more than a military cap to betray his different rank.

As a faithful son of his mother, as a disciple of Rousseau and Goethe, he wished to be a man, not a prince. Hence the Milanese, in calling him "*principe uomo*," expressed with pregnant brevity the central feature of his character. Not only did he order his life in accordance with purely human standards, he also applied them to all affairs of state, and in this respect was far in advance of his officials and subjects, who held fast to traditions. A remark which he once made to Knebel is very characteristic: "For the last few days I have been spending my time in reading the transactions of the Consistory since 1762 concerning suggestions for improvements and inspections of the Weimar Gymnasium. That the most human of all human

conceptions, the education of men, should be presented in the style of legal documents and *modo voti* is incredible. If a man had no conception of a human treatment of such a subject he could not help forming it from its contrary, as soon as he read these documents."

With such convictions, it was natural that all his reforms had a modern, philanthropic, popular tendency, and that he was the first among the German princes to redeem the promise, contained in the act of the German Confederation, to grant a state constitution. This voluntary division of his power was certainly not an easy step for his autocratic, headstrong nature; but to the iron will with which he executed everything that he recognised as right he made himself bow. He had a great many inner struggles, especially in the beginning of his reign, when youthful uncertainty and passion, inherited views and hobbies often caused him to deviate from his high and noble purposes. But every year the victory became easier for him, and he worked with increasing steadfastness and zeal at the liberation and rejuvenation of the State of Weimar. Goethe, who was in advance of him in youth, was unable to keep pace with his rapid progress in old age.

His progressive nature, which early made the duchy a tower of political and religious liberality, also made itself felt in the economic field. "He sought to introduce in his own country all the great new institutions and inventions. If a thing failed it received no further mention, and he immediately took up something new." His art of governing was further aided and fructified by "his ability to distinguish intellects and characters and put each in its right place" (Goethe to Eckermann).

Aided by this gift, by his high-mindedness, and by other rich endowments he succeeded not only in drawing to his Court the leading spirits of the nation, but, what is far more, in keeping them there permanently.

In this way he made Weimar a centre of culture, which cast its illuminating and warming rays over the whole of Germany, overtowered Berlin and Vienna in intellectual

power, and, in fact, could be considered the real, true capital of Germany.

O Weimar, dir fiel ein beſonder Los,
Wie Bethlehem in Juda, Klein und groß.*

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Now if we look back over the long list of personalities described, who united in themselves so much talent, ambition, education, character, and beauty, and if we remember that they frequently received valuable additions from Jena, Erfurt, Gotha, and the country, we can understand how Goethe could with happy heart exchange the great imperial city for the little rural town, the "highly favoured valleys" of the Main and the Rhine for the unfertile hills of Thuringia.

"You would not believe how many good fellows and good heads there are gathered here"; "in such a small space, just as in one family, the equal is nowhere to be found," writes Goethe to his far-away friends. And eleven years later, when the society was still essentially the same, Schiller wrote in the same vein: "All are people such as one never finds together in one place." The select circle possessed for Goethe two other special advantages: youth and woman's influence were its prevalent characteristics. Of the Duchess Dowager, the real patroness of the Court of the Muses, we already know that she was only thirty-six years of age [62] when Goethe arrived in Weimar. Karl August and his wife were no more than half as far advanced in years, while the ages of the others ranged between these extremes, with the exception of Wieland, who with his forty-two years felt like a grandfather in the midst of the young society.

The minds of these youthful people had not yet grown rigid under any doctrine or habit. They readily accepted the new trend of thought and feeling. Whereas in the great city of Frankfort Goethe saw about him only isolated

* On thee, O Weimar, fell the special fate,
Like Bethlehem-Judah, to be small and great.

disciples of his ideas and admirers of his poetry, such as he wished, in little Weimar they formed a dense host, a worshipful congregation, an enthusiastic party.

Furthermore, valuable to the poet as were the men who erred and strove with him on the banks of the Ilm, it was above all the women who made the new life really dear to him. At all times in his life he prized—at first instinctively, then consciously—the society of women as a necessity of life. From them he thought he received the most refined inspirations and the most noble purification. It was only in their presence that the best sides of his nature seemed to unfold and exert a beneficent influence.

Hence one can estimate what a significance it must have had for him to find in Weimar a circle of highly talented and refined women, such as he had never before known. To them especially are we indebted that his tree of life in the growing seriousness of years and business did not run too much to woody fibre, but always put out new leaves and new blossoms.

# XX

## ARRIVAL IN WEIMAR

**Wieland** concerning Goethe—Storm and Stress at the ducal Court—Cult of nature—Gay, unrestrained life—Mutterings of scandalised feelings—Goethe's reasons for sharing in the wild life—His influence on the Duke—He guides from pleasure to work—Klopstock's warning—Pure motives work mischief—Calling of Herder—Ministerial crisis—Fritsch threatens to resign if Goethe is taken into the Privy Council—Duchess Dowager brings about a reconciliation—The Duke's confidence in Goethe—The poet's influence in office—The benefit to him—His Gartenhaus—His new love.

"SINCE this morning my soul has been as full of Goethe as a dewdrop of the morning sun," wrote Wieland, one of the greatest men at the Weimar Court of Genius, three days after Goethe's arrival. His enthusiasm rises still higher when, at the beginning of the new year, as the guest of Frau von Keller and her handsome daughter (his "Psyche"), he has occasion to spend several days with the Frankfort visitor in the undisturbed solitude of the country-seat, Stetten. He cannot contain himself for joy and feels that he must announce to the world in dithyrambic verse the wonderful star that has risen in the firmament of Weimar.

Mit einem ſchwarzen Augenpaar,
Zaubernden Augen voll Götterblicken,
Gleich mächtig zu töten und zu entzücken,
So trat er unter uns, herrlich und hehr,
Ein echter Geiſterkönig, daher!
Und niemand fragte, wer iſt denn der?
Wir fühlten's beim erſten Blick, 's war er!

Wir fühlten's mit allen unsern Sinnen,
Durch alle unsre Adern rinnen.
So hat sich nie in Gottes Welt
Ein Menschensohn uns dargestellt,
Der alle Güte und alle Gewalt
Der Menschheit so in sich vereinigt!
So feines Gold, ganz innerer Gehalt,
Von fremden Schlacken so ganz gereinigt!
Der unzerdrückt von ihrer Last
So mächtig alle Natur umfaßt,
So tief in jedes Wesen sich gräbt,
Und doch so innig im Ganzen lebt!

Das laß mir einen Zaubrer sein!
Wie wurden mit ihm die Tage zu Stunden!
Die Stunden wie augenblicks verschwunden!
Und wieder Augenblicke so reich!
An innerem Werte Tagen gleich!
Was macht er nicht aus unsern Seelen?
Wer schmelzt wie er die Lust im Schmerz?
Wer kann so lieblich ängsten und quälen?
In süßern Tränen zerschmelzen das Herz?
Wer aus der Seelen innersten Tiefen
Mit solch entzückendem Ungestüm
Gefühle erwecken, die ohne ihn
Uns selbst verborgen im Dunkeln schliefen?

O welche Gesichte, welche Scenen
Hieß er vor unsern Augen entstehn?
Wir wähnten nicht zu hören, zu sehn,
Wir sahn! Wer malt wie er? So schön,
Und immer ohne zu verschönen!
So wunderbarlich wahr, so neu,
Und dennoch Zug vor Zug so treu?
Doch wie, was sag' ich malen? Er schafft,
Mit wahrer, mächtiger Schöpferskraft
Erschafft er Menschen; sie atmen, sie streben!
In ihren innersten Fasern ist Leben!
Und jedes so ganz Es selbst, so rein!
Könnte nie etwas anders sein!

Iſt immer echter Menſch der Natur,
Nie Hirngeſpenſt, nie Karikatur,
Nie kahles Gerippe von Schulmoral,
Nie überſpanntes Ideal!

Noch einmal, Pſyche, wie flogen die Stunden
Durch meines Zaubrers Kunſt vorbei!
Und wenn wir dachten, wir hätten's gefunden,
Und was er ſei, nun ganz empfunden,
Wie wurd' er ſo ſchnell uns wieder neu!
Entſchlüpfte plötzlich dem ſatten Blick
Und kam in andrer Geſtalt zurück.
Ließ neue Reize ſich uns entfalten,
Und jede der tauſendfachen Geſtalten
So ungezwungen, ſo völlig fein,
Man mußte ſie für die wahre halten!
Nahm unſre Herzen in jeder ein,
Schien immer nichts davon zu ſehen,
Und wenn er immer glänzend und groß
Rings umher Wärme und Licht ergoß,
Sich nur um ſeine Aſche zu drehen.*

* With eyes as sable as the night,
Magical eyes full of flashes divine,
Of power destructive as well as benign,
Majestic he moved, and to all did seem
In the realm of the spirit a monarch supreme.
And no one asked, "Pray, who may it be?"
We felt at a single glance, it was he.
With all our senses we felt it course
Through all our veins with mighty force.
In all God's world we never yet
A single son of man have met,
Who every virtue so combined
With every power of human soul,
Such gold, of every dross refined,
So pure and inwardly so whole;
Who, by her vastness unoppressed,
All nature folds so close to his breast;
In every being can delve so deep,
And in such touch with all life keep.

Magician would I have him styled!
How days became hours when he was nigh,
And hours like minutes went flitting by!

Thus wrote Wieland, whose enthusiasm found the deepest and most beautiful words ever uttered of Goethe as a poet. Chamberlain von Kalb wrote to Goethe's

And moments, how with rapture prolonged!
Like days with rich recollections thronged.
How quick our response to his magic art!
Who mingles joy as he with fears?
Can grief and pain so lovely impart?
Dissolve the soul in sweeter tears?
Who down in our bosom's deepest core
With such impatient delight
Emotions arouse, which, without his light,
Would sleep in the dark for evermore?

What scenes and oh, what visions bright
He conjured up before us there!
'T was not we seemed to see and hear;
We saw. Who paints as he? so fair,
Yet ne'er a beautifying light;
So wonderfully real, so new,
Yet line for line so wholly true?
Say I, he paints? With power great,
Divine, he doth his men create
In truest sense; they breathe, they strive,
Are in their inmost fibre alive.
Each is so sole an entity,
And nothing else could ever be;
Is ever nature's very child;
No burlesque, no chimera wild,
No stupid creature didactical,
No vain ideal impractical.

Again, O Psyche, how the hours flew,
When guided by my magician's wand!
And when at length we fancied we knew
His powers all, and had felt them, too,
How changed he was in a turn of the hand!
Escaped a moment our sated eyes,
Returned again with new surprise.
New charms he would to us unfold,
Yet of his forms so manifold,
So natural, so all his own,
We could but each the true one hold.
In each of them our hearts he won;
He nought of this seemed to discern;
E'en though he ever, brilliant and great,
True warmth and light did radiate,
He did but round his axis turn.

parents: "Fancy him as the most trusted friend of our dear Duke, who without him cannot live a single day, and loved, yea, idolised by all good fellows . . . and your fancy picture will still be far from complete." "Far from complete," for the good fellows were joined by the good *Misels*, as the ladies were called in the Storm-and-Stress jargon of Weimar. Their enthusiasm for the handsome son of the Main, who arrived in the interesting Werther costume, was not so demonstrative, but it was fully as deep and more lasting. In the farce, *Rino*, which Frau von Stein composed at the time, they all swarm about him with languid, loving looks, and each is happy to be able to show a few letters from him. "I am not in the least surprised that Goethe has become such a universal favourite," replied Zimmermann to a letter from Frau von Stein.

The more the hearts of Weimar society inclined to him the easier it became for him to influence them, and the Ducal Court was soon imbued with Storm and Stress. "Nature," "liberty," "fraternity" became here the watchwords, as they had been before in the Strasburg student circle,—but in a changed sense. In art Goethe had almost overcome naturalism, but in life had taken up with it more passionately than ever. More and more he felt himself to be a part of nature; hence he found ever-increasing happiness in living in communion with nature. After he had slept in his Gartenhaus for the first time he called himself "Erdkülin," * after a character in a fairy tale. He spoke of his "earthy smell" and "earthy feeling," he felt at home in

* *I. e.*, Erdkühlein. Formerly, before the fairy tale was re-discovered, the word was spelled "Erdtulin," which was an etymological enigma. Goethe probably read the tale in an old Alsatian version; hence the form, "Erdkülin." The Erdkühlein, nourished only by Mother Earth, lives all alone in a tiny little house, and refreshes the good people who come thither. Goethe afterward wrote of his Gartenhaus:

Allen, die daselbst verkehrt,
Ward ein guter Mut bescheert.

[All who paid a visit here
Felt their souls refreshed with cheer.]

gulches, caves, and forests. From the embrace of nature he fancied that he derived new strength. In nature there were revealed to him the secret wonders of his own heart as well as those of nature herself. With this cult of nature he saturated his whole environment in Weimar. "Drink in the earth-sap, drink in life," was Karl August's advice in a poetic epistle to Frau von Stein. "Nowhere do I feel well until, staff in hand, I live and reign beneath my trees and inhale the infinite earth-spirit," wrote Wieland, who had never before dreamed of an earth-spirit. "The governor of Erfurt spent a few days with us and did not depart without an 'earthy smell,'" writes Goethe, delighted, to Baron von Fritsch (August, 1776). Schiller, who loved best to dwell in the realm of thought, was quite vexed, on his first visit in Weimar, over "the attachment to nature, carried to the point of affectation."

A result of living close to nature was complete abandon, a desire to round out their lives in unrestrained freedom. The younger the Weimar society, and the greater its power and resources, the wilder and more extravagant this free reign of the individuality necessarily became. Karl August especially thirsted for such a life. His vigorous temperament had heretofore, as it were, been confined in a strait-jacket. Governors and privy councillors had laboured with him day after day, and shut him off from life, as if by a barricade. He had legally and actually been under tutelage. At the moment when he reached his majority he had become a reigning prince and a husband, and, instead of gaining his liberty, seemed to be weighed down by heavier and tighter chains. His whole being revolted, and, even if Goethe had not come, he would have used his princely sovereignty to satisfy his repressed longing for the free enjoyment of life. Contact with Goethe's fiery spirit only hastened his natural development.

Life began to be gay, excited, unrestrained. Drinking bouts, cards and dice, balls in palaces and in village inns, stag chases, mountain hunts, sleighing and skating, masquerades, picnics, theatres, and love-making furnished the

desired excitement. Besides, there were many extra pleasures, and one may well believe that Goethe and the Duke occasionally stood in the market-place and vied with each other in cracking the whip, or that they disturbed the night's rest of a young married couple, or had the door to Fräulein von Göchhausen's room secretly walled up, and the like. Karl August doubtless not infrequently went farther, and became rough and childish, as may every day be observed in the student life of normally sensible and well-bred people. If Karl August and Goethe had led such a wild life as *Korps-Studenten* nobody would have said a word about it. As it was, it might have been excusable in Goethe; he was a sort of Storm-and-Stress fellow and as yet not invested with any office; but Karl August was a prince, a sovereign, and a married man. Hence his life must have caused many a scandalised shake of the head among the citizens and officials of Weimar, who were not attuned to Storm-and-Stress pitch. Einsiedel, in one of the satires which were read in the "Weltgeisterei," [63] Karl August's more intimate circle, takes off the chorus of grumblers with excellent humour:

Nun denk' man ſich 'en Fürſtenſohn,
Der ſo vergißt Geburt und Thron
Und lebt mit ſolchen lockern Geſellen,
Die dem lieben Gott die Zeit abprellen;
Die tun, als wär'n ſie ſeinesgleichen,
Ihm nicht einmal den Fuchsſchwanz ſtreichen,
Die des Bruders Reſpekt ſo ganz verkennen,
*Tout court* ihn „Bruderherz" tun nennen,
Glaub'n, es wohne da Menſchenverſtand,
Wo man all *etiquette* verbannt,
Sprech'n immer aus vollem Herz,
Treib'n mit der heil'gen Staatskunſt Scherz
Sind ohne Plan und Politik,
Verhunz'n unſer beſtes Meiſterſtück.*

* Just fancy, pray, a prince's son
Who so forgets his birth and throne
And lives with a degenerate mob,
Who God of every minute rob;

Goethe had his share in the pranks; yet he secretly approved of many of the objections to them, and it is certain that he took only a half-hearted part in many of the disorderly amusements. He was obliged to join in them for two reasons. A young man does not impress a vigorous young generation by mere intellectual superiority: least of all a burgher young nobleman or princes. He must also show that he is their physical peer in endurance and agility. If Goethe demonstrated to the young Prince of Weimar that he could hold his own in drinking as well as any German nobleman; that in riding he found no ditch too broad, no hedge too high, no rocky bridle-path too hard, no way too long; that he was a good hunter, a skilful dancer and skater; that he understood every sport; that he could spend a whole winter night in drinking and dancing, and then before break of day start on a hunt, then and then only could he be sure that the Prince and his cavaliers would have full respect for him. This respect was very important in his opinion, not for the sake of his own person, but for the high ideals which he pursued with the Duke. The other controlling motive was his desire to be everywhere present, that he might at all times be able to check the untamed youth and prevent his exuberant powers from going to excesses that might lead to his own and the country's ruin.

It is not a question of whether or not Goethe in his bearing was always conscious of these ruling motives. That they were often the secret of his actions cannot be doubted, any more than that he, from the very first, sought

> They flatter him no more—the sequel
> Of their demeanour as his equal—
> And now no more their prince revere;
> *Tout court* they call him "brother dear";
> Think that human wisdom is found,
> Where all etiquette falls to the ground;
> Always speak what is in their heart,
> Making a joke of the statesman's art;
> No plan or policy employ;
> Our greatest masterpiece destroy.

to gain a dominant influence over the young Prince. Goethe was always an active nature and needed to be exerting his powers and influence.* To devote exclusively to pleasure and amusements a visit that lasted for weeks would have been to him the most distasteful thing in the world. For this reason he took advantage of the opportunity and the Prince's love for him to exert a beneficent influence upon the sovereign, without a thought of whether or not he himself should remain there, or perhaps with the very thought that in a few weeks or months he should depart from the principality. The educational influence which he exerted over Karl August is not very noticeable in the earlier stages, but when we gain an insight into it we find it as interesting as it is instructive. We observe how cleverly the poet chooses the most varied ways and means to preach serious truths to the Duke without any schoolmasterly obtrusiveness; as, on a visit in Kochberg, hardly a month after his arrival, when he approaches the Duke as a humble peasant, pays his homage to him in doggerel, and then continues:

Geb' Euch Gott allen guten Segen,
Nur laßt Euch ſein uns angelegen,
Denn wir bäuriſch treues Blut
Sind doch immer Euer beſtes Gut,
Und könnt Euch mehr an uns erfreun,
Als an Pferden und Stuterein.†

Or in a letter from Waldeck (Christmas, 1775), in which he inserts in the midst of all sorts of drollery the following verses from Isaiah, which he says he has just been reading: "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty; and maketh

* "There is nothing more wretched than a man, in comfortable circumstances, without work," wrote Goethe in his diary, in January, 1779.

† God grant thee all his blessings rare,
Pray of our weal have thou a care;
The faithful peasants of thy nation
Are in the end thy best possession;
We more can please than princely stud,
Or steed of most illustrious blood.

it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. . . . The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in. . . . In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction." He adds no word of explanation, but we feel between the lines that it is not the poetic beauty which bids him copy the passage for the Duke, but the desire, by means of the picture of the exhausted country, to admonish the Duke to spare his own land and people.

Apart from these half-masked bits of advice there are not a few direct ones. When he was alone with the Duke, especially in the quiet of the room, and the conversation touched upon the duties of the Duke as sovereign and husband, then Goethe, as we can see from certain letters and passages in his diary, laid down the law to him very energetically, albeit with the cleverness of genius and the warmth of love. He often talked with the Duke on such subjects till after midnight, and if, instead of going home, he spent the night with his "dear lord," the respectable officials and citizens may well have thought the two were revelling in champagne, or holding God only knows what other orgies. That, too, Goethe was obliged to suffer in silence.

. . . Ich bin nicht bereit,
Des Fremden Neugier leicht zu ſtillen;
Sogar verbitt' ich deinen guten Willen;
Hier iſt zu ſchweigen und zu leiden Zeit.*

We see further how Goethe, far from losing sight of the serious duties of government, even on the merry hunts,

* . . . I do not care
The stranger's curiosity to still;
I even must forbid thine own good will;
A time is this to suffer and forbear.

drives, and rides in the country, makes them the means of leading the Duke from pleasure to work. With his peculiar versatility and his rare talent for presenting the useful in the garb of the beautiful he may on such occasions have inspired the Duke with an interest in the improvement of the roads, the care of fields and forests, and the promotion of trade and industry. In this way we can understand his writing to Johanna Fahlmer, in February, 1776: "I am just beginning to get acquainted with the country, and this of itself affords me great pleasure. It is also giving the Duke a love of work."

Who saw this beneficent labour of Goethe's? The scattered seed was only germinating; it needed time to grow and become visible. Meanwhile the world saw nothing but all the mischief which Goethe had apparently wrought. It saw how the Duke was undermining his health by his irregular life and, as was also whispered about, by his immoderate drinking; it saw how he risked life and limb for no other reason than to spend his rage on horseback; how the business of state was at a standstill; how old and meritorious officials were set aside; how the income of the Duke, instead of being employed in dignified Court representation, was squandered in drinking and gaming; and how the young Duchess was mourning in solitude over her unhappy marriage. All this with sensational additions was borne from mouth to mouth and told abroad, and the blame for it all was thrown on Goethe. For he was the older and more sensible, and a bosom friend, and only after his arrival had the crazy doings begun. Openly and secretly, from Weimar and from abroad, came warnings, admonitions, pleadings. Finally even the singer of the *Messias* allowed himself to be persuaded to write a "friendly letter" to Goethe, in which he said: "Let me not begin by saying that I know it on good authority; for without good authority I should certainly remain silent. Do not think, either, that I intend to preach to you with regard to your conduct; nor that I judge you harshly, because you perchance have other views than mine on certain subjects.

Your principles and mine aside, what will be the result, pray, if this continues? If the Duke continues his over-indulgence in drink till it makes him ill, instead of, as he says, making him physically stronger, it will ruin his constitution and bring him to an early grave. Doubtless young men with inherited strong constitutions—and such the Duke certainly is not—have in this way materially shortened their lives. The Germans have hitherto had reason to complain that their princes would have nothing to do with their scholars. They now gladly make an exception of the Duke of Weimar. But what will not other princes have to say in justification of themselves, if you continue your present conduct? If only that should happen, which I feel will happen! As yet the Duchess would perhaps be able to subdue her sorrow, for she has a masculine mind. But this sorrow will become grief, and peradventure you think that that too can be suppressed? Luise's grief, Goethe! Nay, do not boast that you love her as I do! . . . It is for you to decide whether or not you will show this letter to the Duke. For my part I have no objections; quite the contrary, for he certainly has not yet come to the point when he will not listen to the truth spoken by a true friend."

Goethe had passed by all other epistles with a laugh or a shrug of the shoulders. Klopstock's offended him, and he felt it necessary to silence the true friend with a curt, decisive answer: "Spare us such letters in the future, dear Klopstock! They do us no good and always make us angry for a few hours. You feel yourself that I have no answer to make. Either I would have to intone a *Pater, peccavi*, like a school-boy, or offer a sophistical excuse, or defend myself as a man of honour, and, in truth, perhaps a mingling of all three would be the result; but to what purpose? Therefore no further words between us on this subject. Believe me that I should not have a moment's rest if I answered all such admonitions. For a moment it pained the Duke that it was a Klopstock. He loves and honours you; you know and feel the same is true of me

. . ." Klopstock wrote an uncivil answer which forever ended friendly relations between the two men.

It is characteristic that Goethe in his letter did not flatly deny that there were grounds for the complaint against him, but half admitted that there were such when he hinted that his answer would be a mingling of confession, excuse, and defence. He did the same thing at other times with a more punctilious sense of honour than the occasion demanded. The most magnificent example is in the poem *Ilmenau:*

Ich brachte reines Feuer vom Altar,
Was ich entzündet, iſt nicht reine Flamme,
Der Sturm vermehrt die Glut und die Gefahr,
Ich ſchwanke nicht, indem ich mich verdamme.
. . . . . .
Nun ſitz ich hier zugleich erhoben und gedrückt,
Unſchuldig und geſtraft und ſchuldig * und beglückt.†

As a result of this unintentional guilt [*unschuldige Schuld*], for which he so often in his life had to suffer, and as a result of the complaints heard against him on all sides, and the unhappiness of the Duchess, whom he so highly respected, he had many a trying hour in the midst of the whirl of distractions. At such times he would step aside and commune with the Creator in his own way.

Der du von dem Himmel biſt,
Alle Freud' und Schmerzen ſtilleſt,
Den, der doppelt elend iſt,
Doppelt mit Erquickung fülleſt,

* The genuine reading is here given, instead of the common one: *unschuldig und beglückt.*

† Pure fire I from the sacred altar brought,
What I enkindled is unholy flame,
Whose storm-fanned fury is with danger fraught;
I waver not in that myself I blame.
. . . . . .
Now sit I here, at once exultant and oppressed;
Am innocent and punished; guilty, yet am blessed.

Ach, ich bin des Treibens müde!
Was soll all die Qual und Lust?
Süßer Friede,
Komm, ach komm in meine Brust.*

In spite of the hostilities and the disagreements with which he was harassed soon after his arrival, Goethe could not think of leaving Weimar very soon, even if the Duke should not wish to retain him permanently. His conscientiousness, bravery, and faithful friendship compelled him at least to await the issue of two important matters which had been taken up a few weeks after his coming.

The first was the calling of Herder to the office of Superintendent General of matters ecclesiastical in Weimar. "I must have this arranged before I leave," he wrote to Herder on the 2nd of January. But the project had scarcely been whispered around when there developed a bitter opposition to it. The opposition originated with the Supreme Consistory, whose members were united against Herder from a strange combination of worldly and religious motives. They were especially fearful with regard to Herder's supposed latitudinarianism. The most absurd and insipid things were circulated about him, and, as a result, a large part of the congregation were horrified at the thought of the new Superintendent General. The opposition was so violent that Goethe did not even consider the privacy of letters secure, and begged his friend to name some orthodox theologian who would vouch for him. But even when, at the end of January, the matter was settled in favor of Herder by the firm intervention of the Duke, the opposition was able to put a thousand things in the way of

* Thou who Heaven's appointed art,
Every joy and sorrow stillest,
And the doubly aching heart
Doubly with refreshment fillest,
Oh, that my unrest might cease!
Wherefore all this joy and pain?
Come, sweet peace,
Come, and in my bosom reign.

the final call and installation. These petty bickerings were successfully settled by Goethe, but it was no pleasant task. Yet what would he not have done to bring to his side his great guide and his dear Darmstadt "saint"?

His further stay in Weimar had meanwhile been determined upon in connection with the second and more important affair. A severe ministerial crisis had been hovering over Weimar since December. The duchy was in danger of losing its excellent prime minister. Even before the accession of Karl August, von Fritsch, fearing he did not possess the confidence of the Duke, had been contemplating retirement from his political position as president of the Privy Council (Ministry) to the neutral one of president of the judiciary. His father had persuaded him not to take this step. And then Karl August, returning from his wedding journey, made him the astonishing proposal that he assume the presidency of the judiciary in addition to his position as minister. As the ministerial duties of themselves required all the strength which the diligent man could muster, he could hardly consider the proposal anything other than an attempt to crowd him out of the Council. He immediately saw the logical consequences, and, on the 9th of December, begged to be relieved of his ministerial position and intrusted only with the presidency of the judiciary.

We may assume that Karl August was inclined to grant the request. Ever since the days of his minority he had cherished a grievance against Fritsch, and probably had, besides, the desire common among new sovereigns to surround himself with new servants. We may also assume, however, that Goethe quickly recognised the great worth of Fritsch and the far-reaching consequences which would attend his retirement, and that he laboured with Karl August for weeks to restrain him from an overhasty step. In the course of these interviews Karl August probably secured Goethe's promise to remain with him permanently and enter the Privy Council. This is the only explanation of the fact that the Duke did not return to Fritsch's petition till

the middle of February, when he invited him to an audience, in which he in an "exceedingly gracious manner" begged him to retain his old position as heretofore, but at the same time disclosed to him his plan of making various changes in the personnel: he intended to transfer to Chamberlain von Kalb the presidency of the Chamber, *i. e.*, the portfolio of finance, and to appoint Doctor Goethe a member of the Council. Against both these steps Fritsch immediately entered a very frank and very determined protest, especially against the appointment of Goethe, as he considered the frivolous young belletristic advocate from Frankfort wholly incapable of administering such a high and responsible office in a state with which he was unfamiliar. He begged the Duke in any case to consider his plans maturely. Again the Duke allowed more than two months to pass before he announced his decision to the minister. This second long hesitation was so unnatural in the hot-headed, stubborn Prince, especially when, as in this case, it was a question of the fulfilment of his heart's desires, that we must ascribe it also to Goethe's intervention. Goethe may have hoped that in time the differences would adjust themselves, Fritsch become better acquainted with him, and the Duke gain more repose. How great a part Goethe had in the Duke's every act in the case we may best see from the fact that he looked over the first draught of the decision which was finally communicated on the 21st of April, and softened down some of its harsh features. In it the Duke again begged Fritsch to retain his position in the Council, affirming, however, that he must insist on his former plans, including the changes in the personnel of the Council.

Fritsch was ruffled in the highest degree by the decision. From the long delay he may have expected that the Duke had approved his objections, but now it was out of the question; and if the Duke would not listen to him in such important questions of personnel and organisation, how could he hope for any further success in his official activities? Besides, there was some justification for his fears that the

appointment of Goethe and von Kalb to the governmental service would not be the end, but that they would be followed by more such eccentric and wild youths. Herder, who belonged to this class, had already received the highest office in the church. Lenz, who entertained extravagant notions on military policy,[64] and whose career of folly in Weimar dated from the 1st of April, had perhaps been fixed upon for the directorship of the war department; Fritz Stolberg, who, back in November, had given a striking performance as a Storm-and-Stress character, Wagner, and Klinger were, or seemed to be, coming into favour—what should he, the serious official, do by the side of such fellows? His mind was accordingly soon made up. On the following day he handed in his resignation from the governmental service of Weimar. He considered it his duty, however, as a faithful servant of the state and the ducal house, before taking his departure to raise his voice in all frankness and with all possible emphasis against the plans of the Duke. We are interested here only in what was said about the purpose of calling Goethe into the Council. He says he has been pained to hear that the Duke persists in a determination which may bring upon him the criticism of all the world, and which Goethe, if he has any real attachment and love for the Duke, must himself disapprove. He is so thoroughly convinced of the mistake of the step, that he can no longer sit in a *collegium*, of which the aforesaid Doctor Goethe is to be a member. Furthermore he will not conceal from the Duke the fact that the public is quite generally dissatisfied with the hitherto dilatory administration of government affairs.

On receipt of this letter the Duke's anger doubtless burst into flames. Especially the sentence about Goethe, the divine friend of his heart, by whose side Fritsch would not sit, must have thoroughly aroused his passion. Nevertheless sixteen days pass before he answers the minister. The answer is dated the 10th of May. On this day Goethe returned from a little tour in the country, having had occasion on the way to write the Duke a lecture on

impetuosity. The letter of the 10th of May is an-imperishable monument which the Duke erected to his own and Goethe's honour, and must have its place in every biography of Goethe.

"Herr Geheimer Rat: Your letter of the 24th of April was duly received. In it you tell me your opinion with all the uprightness which I should expect of so sterling a man as you. You demand your dismissal from the service, because, as you say, you can no longer sit in a *collegium* of which Doctor Goethe is a member. As a matter of fact this should not be a sufficient reason to bring you to such a decision. If Doctor Goethe were a man of doubtful character, every one would approve your decision; but Goethe is upright, his heart is extraordinarily good and tender. I am not the only person pleased with him; men of great insight congratulate me on the possession of such a man. His mental capacity and genius are known. You yourself will understand, that such a man would not endure the tedious and mechanical labour of working up from the bottom in a Council of State. Not to employ a man of genius in the place where he can make use of his extraordinary talents is to abuse him; I hope you are as convinced of the truthfulness of this statement as I am. Touching the point, that by this means many meritorious people who had some title to this position were set aside, I know of no one in my service who aspired to it; secondly, I shall never bestow a position which stands in such immediate relation to me personally, and to the weal and woe of my subjects, on the basis of seniority; I shall be guided only by my confidence in the man. As for the judgment of the world, which would disapprove of my putting Doctor Goethe in my most important *collegium* without his having been either a magistrate, professor, councillor on the Board of Domains, or councillor on the Government Board, this does not affect my judgment in the least; the world judges according to its prejudices, but I, as well as every other man who wishes to do his duty, do not work for fame, but that I may be able to justify myself before God and my own

conscience, and I seek to act without any thought of the applause of the world. In consideration of all this I confess myself greatly surprised that you, Herr Geheimer Rat, decide to leave me now, at the very moment when you yourself must, and certainly do, feel how much I need you. Consider how strange it must seem to me that, instead of taking pleasure in giving a capable young man, like the oft-mentioned Goethe, the benefit of the experience you have gained in twenty-two years of faithful service, you prefer to leave my service in a way insulting alike to Doctor Goethe and, I cannot deny it, to me. For it is as if it were a disgrace for you to sit in a *collegium* with one whom I, as you know, consider my friend, and who has never given occasion to be despised, has rather merited the love of all upright men." At the end the Duke remarks: "You are your own lord and master and may do what you like; I should consider it an injustice to curtail the liberties of anybody whomsoever in such important events of his life, but how I wish you might come to a different decision!"

Thus Karl August does not even now sever the bond which unites him to Fritsch. He gives the minister, in flattering form, a chance to retract. But Fritsch remains immovable. In another letter of the following day he emphasises the fact that it was far from his intention to offend the Duke, but asserts that he cannot change his decision.

Accordingly, there seemed to be no prospect of retaining the minister. The Duke could make no further advances without humiliating himself, and Goethe was neither able nor willing to retire; not merely because his resignation would have done no good, but he was most firmly convinced that it would have brought unspeakable harm to the duchy. Who else was able to harness the volcanic powers of the Duke and make them a source of blessing? As a last resort, the Duchess Dowager was implored to intervene. She stood equally close to Fritsch and to Goethe. Fritsch had been her confidential adviser for fourteen years and they had laboured together in perfect harmony. On the other hand, the penetrating eye of the Princess had quickly

recognised the incomparable treasures deposited in Goethe's soul, no matter under what disguise they appeared. Since she, as a mother and an ex-regent, could have only the welfare of her son and of the country in view, and since she spoke as the minister's friend, her voice could not but have the greatest weight. She wrote*: "My son, the Duke, has shown his confidence in me by laying before me the correspondence that has passed between him and you with regard to the reorganisation which has become necessary. In it I am pained to see that it is your purpose to forsake my son, and that, too, in a moment when you are most indispensable to him. The reasons which you adduce have caused me deep sorrow; they are unworthy of such a clever man as you, with your knowledge of the world. You are prejudiced against Goethe, whom you probably know only from untrue reports, or you judge him from a false point of view. You know how dear to my heart is the fame of my son, and how I have laboured and still labour daily that he may be surrounded by men of honour. If I thought Goethe a cringing creature, to whom no interest was sacred but his own, and whose every act was prompted by ambition, I should be the first to oppose him. I shall not speak to you of his talents, of his genius, I shall refer only to his moral character. His religion is that of a good, true Christian, and teaches him to love his neighbour and to seek to make him happy. That is, after all, the first and chief desire of our Creator. Make Goethe's acquaintance, try to learn to know him. You are aware that I first examine my people thoroughly before passing judgment concerning them, that I have had a great deal of practical experience in such examinations, and that I judge impartially. Believe a friend who is truly devoted to you both from gratitude and affection. Even if my son, the Duke, had taken an overhasty step, did you not satisfy your whole obligation when you called his attention to the fact? and if he persists, is it your blunder? It seems to me the world

* The original letter is in French.

would blame you if you were to forsake a prince who has need of your insight and uprightness. Judge yourself whether or not it is in harmony with the religion which you confess. Think it over once more to yourself; I know your gratitude; I beg you, out of love for me, do not forsake my son under these circumstances; this is my advice and my petition."

The letter had the desired effect. The austere Fritsch withdrew his resignation, and, by the decree of June 11, 1776, Goethe was made Geheimer Legationsrat, with a seat and a voice in the Council and a salary of 1200 thalers. After the close of the incident Goethe wrote, not without feeling, to his old Wetzlar friends, the Kestners, now in Hanover: "The Duke, with whom I have now been associated nearly nine months in the truest and closest soul-sympathy, has finally bound me also to his affairs; out of our love has arisen a marriage, and may God add his blessing!" The touching aspect and the grandeur of this unique relation found no less beautiful expression in a letter which the Duke, through Kalb, directed to Goethe's parents. In it he told them that, if traditional formalities had not made it necessary, he never should have thought of offering their son any other position than that of his friend, knowing only too well that all others were beneath his worth. At the same time they were informed that Goethe was to receive the position, but retain his complete liberty. He begged them to give their consent, which would be the easier for them when they considered for how many thousands of people happiness would be preserved by this sacrifice.

The last sentence shows what unlimited confidence the Duke had in Goethe's political wisdom, and what influence and authority he intended to invest him with as an expression of this confidence. And, in fact, Goethe was in these early years the soul of the Weimar Government. He occasionally calls himself the second man in the kingdom, and Seckendorff sarcastically calls him the Duke's *successeur*. Wieland wrote: "Goethe lives and rules and storms and gives rain and sunshine, and makes us happy,

no matter what he does." Lavater's words had been fulfilled: "Goethe would be a splendid man of authority with a prince. That is where he belongs. He has the making of a king."

Whoever can make others happy is happy himself. Goethe felt this in his political activity, and felt it reacting on him for good in still another way. Practical work formed a wholesome counterpoise to his passions and imaginative life. True, he had such an antidote at his disposal in Frankfort in his practice as an advocate; but that was so odious to him that he kept as far away from it as possible. "Even if it were only for a few years, still it is better than an inactive life at home, where with the best of intentions I can accomplish nothing. Here I have a few duchies before me" (to Johanna Fahlmer, February 14, 1776). Even the opposition which he meets is welcome. The gushing spring of life-energy does not grow stagnant; it keeps up a refreshing flow. "As I am now in a position where I have to summon all my powers from day to day, and must needs meet the great and small problems of love and hate, infamy and power, with my own heart and brain, I am happy" (to Bürger, February 2, 1776). "I am not what you would call overwhelmed with affairs of state, but am all the more annoyed by that which is at the bottom of all such affairs, viz., the crazy whims, passions and follies, weaknesses and strong points of men. This is advantageous for me in that it leaves me no time to think of myself, and as Frau Aja remembers that I was intolerable when nothing annoyed me, I am now safe, since I have annoyances" (to his mother, November 6, 1776). It must have deepened his satisfaction that from the moment when Fritsch decided to remain in office the circle of his admirers continually increased. This was a signal that Goethe's era signified, not an immature revolutionary policy, but an organic union of the present with the vital elements of the past.

By the side of the great political position which the Duke bestowed upon his favourite, it seems very unimportant to

speak of the home which his princely friend provided for him. But, later in life, when Goethe wished to boast of what the Duke had given him, it was not in vain that, immediately after "love, leisure, confidence" he mentioned "fields, garden, and house." A nest to fit his fondest desires was for young Goethe, so dependent upon his external surroundings, one of the most valuable gifts. Boettiger, quoting the ironical but quite apt remark of Bertuch, says: "Goethe could not capture his world-spirit in a narrow, reeking pool, commonly called a city." He longed for a dwelling out in open nature. Hardly did the Duke learn his wish when he bought him a cottage (Gartenhaus) on the further side of the Ilm valley and furnished it at his own expense. Goethe never spent happier days than in this plain house and its large, terraced garden. On the 17th of May he writes: "I have a dear little garden on the Ilm outside the gate, beautiful meadows in a valley. There is a little old house in it, which I am having repaired for me." On the 18th: "10 P.M. in my garden. I have sent my Philipp [his valet] home and intend to sleep here the first night alone. It is a glorious feeling to sit out here alone in the field. How beautiful the morning! Everything is so still. I hear only the ticking of my watch, and the wind, and the weir from the distance."

Ich geh' meinen alten Gang
Meine liebe Wieſe lang,
Tauche mich in die Sonne früh,
Bad' ab im Monde des Tages Müh.*

Goethe had become a baron in his own domain.

The agreeable circumstances, both private and public, under which he took up his abode in Weimar were full of honour and rich in promise for the future, and, in the case of any other man, would have been sufficient to explain a

* I go my accustomed way
By my meadow dear each day,
Plunge at morn into the sun,
Lave off fatigue in the evening moon.

declaration made by him in the summer of 1776, that his position was the happiest of which the human imagination could dream. But with Goethe this was not explanation enough. When he uses such a strong expression, we may be sure that that element was added which he calls the "crown of life," "happiness without peace," viz., love. It came to him through Charlotte von Stein.

# XXI

## FRAU VON STEIN

Secret of Frau von Stein's influence on Goethe—Weimar shocked at their intimacy—Goethe's influence on Frau von Stein—Her inner struggle—She seeks to keep him within bounds—*Proserpina*—He seeks to replace love with friendship, till he discovers that his love is returned—Marriage of souls—Extraordinary influence on Goethe and his later writings—He takes her into all his secrets and writes for her—Gloomy forebodings.

GOETHE'S relation to Charlotte von Stein was the most remarkable, most important, most enduring, that he ever had with any woman. Not a beautiful, charming maiden, not a lovely rosebud, not even a full-blown rose, such as often reaches its full splendour at the noontime of life, but a suffering, married woman, almost faded, agreeable in appearance, but not what would be called beautiful, the mother of seven children, and herself seven years older than Goethe,—such was the woman who aroused in him passionate love and sentimental adoration. And the waves of ardent passion did not subside after a few months, as heretofore in the case of his heart's chosen ones; they surged through his soul for twelve years with little to indicate any diminution of his ardour.

What were the qualities that enabled Frau von Stein to triumph over all the lovely girls that Goethe met on his journey through life? At bottom it was only one quality, but this one was enough to give her the strongest influence, in fact, what seems to us a wonderful, magic power over him: she was able thoroughly to understand the soul of this enigmatical man, who was inclined to conceal rather than

to reveal his deepest emotions. Other noble and delicately sensitive women, such as Lili, or men of keen perceptions, like Merck, had in large measure understood his eccentric genius, but Frau von Stein was the first to comprehend him in all his aspects. What such a comprehension of his innermost being meant to him, especially during his Storm-and-Stress years, he expressed with deep feeling in these verses, written immediately after the first months of his acquaintance with Frau von Stein (April, 1776):

Kannteſt jeden Zug in meinem Weſen,
Spähteſt, wie die reinſte Nerve klingt,
Konnteſt mich mit einem Blicke leſen,
Den ſo ſchwer ein ſterblich Aug' durchdringt.

Tropfteſt Mäßigung dem heißen Blute,
Richteteſt den wilden, irren Lauf,
Und in deinen Engelsarmen ruhte
Die zerſtörte Bruſt ſich wieder auf.*

We seem to be in the presence of Iphigenia, majestic, pure, and wise, as she casts the torturing, maddening furies out of the soul of Orestes. To the poet the prophetic eye of his beloved seemed so supernatural, the harmony of her soul with his so strange, that he thought it could not be explained otherwise than by the mystery of their pre-existence in close union:

Sag', wie band das Schickſal uns ſo rein genau?—
Ach, du warſt in abgelebten Zeiten
Meine Schweſter oder meine Frau! †

* Thou didst know each secret of my being,
Tingling of each nerve didst recognise,
Hadst the subtle power of clearly seeing
Depths almost obscured from mortal eyes.

Thou didst lend restraint to my excesses,
Bid my wild and wayward striving cease,
And in thine angelic, fond caresses
Found my troubled bosom blessed peace.

† Speak. How bound us fate in such harmonious life?
Thou, alas, wast in some former state
Or my sister or my loving wife!

FRAU VON STEIN
(From Könnecke's *Bilderatlas*)

His happiness over having found such a being tempted him to burst through the barriers of custom and law in his associations with her. With his frankness and innocence it was far from him to conceal his feelings. But liberal as were the views in Weimar on the proper relation between man and woman, and customary as were the tender gallantries of men toward the married and unmarried objects of their love, the passionateness of Goethe's love attentions to Frau von Stein transcended by far the usual bounds, and gave offence to the world, though very little, or none whatever, to her husband. Master of the Horse von Stein, dull and materialistic, showed, in his noon and evening meals at the Court table, in a quiet game, in the princely stables, in his Weimar carriage factory, or in his Kochberg distillery and fat oxen, an infinitely greater interest than in the visits which Goethe paid his wife, or the tender messages which passed between them. He probably looked upon the wooing much as men of his estate six centuries before had upon the languishing homage paid to their wives by enraptured minnesingers. Indeed, he may not have been the least displeased with Goethe's associations with his wife, as long as the poet did not go to extremes.

The life of Frau von Stein had taken on a melancholy tinge. Her delicate, gentle, pure, and talented nature, whose equal, according to Knebel, could hardly be found in Germany, had met with no appreciable sympathy from her husband. Behind her lay eleven years of a joyless, apathetic married relation. Of the seven children whom she, in the midst of manifold sufferings, had brought into the world, four had already been borne to the grave. Lonely, sad, ill, she sat at home with her little sons, a disagreeable, uncomfortable sight for her husband, who neither could nor would give up the Court and society. Along came Goethe, entertained and cheered her, and restored her to a life of sociability. Out of gratitude the Master of the Horse not only tolerated the intimacy, but even promoted it, and occasionally consented to carry greetings and letters from the good-hearted, but strange, enthusiastic admirer,

to whom he furthermore gladly intrusted the education of his children, for he himself had no time to look after them. But other and stricter natures—among them Charlotte's pious mother, a woman of Scottish descent—did not regard the intimacy so lightly, as they recognised more clearly its deep significance. In it they saw not only a transgression of the laws of propriety and higher morality, but, before they became acquainted with Goethe's conscientiousness and chivalry, they doubtless feared worse things from a continuation of the intercourse. Frau von Stein was herself filled with conflicting emotions. She could hardly make herself believe that she did not return Goethe's love. The great change which had taken place in her informed her of the true condition of her heart. Unfortunately we do not possess her letters to Goethe. Only a single one, unless we are deceived by a plausible supposition, seems to have been preserved in *Die Geschwister*, written in the autumn of 1776. This letter reads: "The world is again growing dear to me—I had become so alienated from it—and it is all through you. My heart reproaches me; I feel that I am preparing agony for you as well as for myself. Six months ago I was ready to die, but I am so no longer." This letter, whether invented or copied from an original, corresponds, at any rate, with the reality. March 25, 1776, after about four months of close acquaintance, Goethe, who was away on a journey, wrote to Frau von Stein: "Beyond Naumburg the sun arose to meet me! Dear friend, a sight full of hope, fulfilment, and prophecy . . . the sun shining as golden as ever—not alone to these eyes, but to this heart as well. Oh, it is the spring which never runs dry! the fire which never goes out, not even in eternity! Best of women, not in thee either, who often fanciest that the holy spirit of life has forsaken thee."

But the more plainly Frau von Stein feels the love animating her, the more her chaste soul is disturbed.

Ob's Unrecht iſt, was ich empfinde,
Und ob ich büßen muß die mir ſo liebe Sünde,

Will mein Gewiſſen mir nicht ſagen;
Vernicht' es Himmel du! Wenn mich's je könnt anklagen—*

she once wrote upon the back of a letter from Goethe. In her perturbation she defended herself bravely against her own heart and against the passionate advances of her gifted lover, in spite of the fact that she was little beholden to her husband for his conduct toward her. She firmly insists that Goethe moderate the expressions of his passion and keep more aloof from her, if not for her sake, then for the world's. At this rebuff he is convulsed with grief. He is conscious that he has approached her with the purest intentions, and has asked nothing of her that one human being is not justified in asking of another, viz., consolation, pacification, enlightenment. Shrill cries of pain escape his bleeding breast: "Even this relation, the purest, most beautiful, most sincere, that I have ever borne to any woman except my sister, this, too, disturbed! If I am not to live with you, your love is of as little help to me as the love of my absent friends, in which I am so rich—and all this for the sake of the world! The world, which itself can be nothing to me, is not even willing that thou † shalt be anything to me. You know not what you are doing. The hand of one who shuts himself up in solitude, and does not hear the voice of love, presses heavy where it lies" (May 24, 1776). On the next day, in deep sorrow, he worked at a poem which he was to write for Gluck on the death of the latter's niece. What was she to him, who had never known her? The touching, sorrowful chords, at first softly swelling, then dying away in despair, as they quiver through the monodrama, *Proserpina*,[65] the final form into which he cast the dirge, echo his grief over the love-bond with Frau

* Is 't wrong, my bosom's deep impression?
And must I yet atone for this so dear transgression?
This light my conscience doth refuse me;
Then do destroy it, Heaven, if e'er it could accuse me—

† This confusion of pronouns of address reproduces the *Du* and *Sie* of the German, which throws a strong light on Goethe's futile attempt to control his emotions.—C.

von Stein, which apparently had vanished into the realm of the shades. During the next few months he pours forth his sorrow in ever more pleading, more yearning tones. He comes to her beseechingly, like a punished child to its mother: "Be loving to me as of yore, and I will write more seldom and call to see you more seldom." And again he exclaims like a grieving penitent: "For a time you have seemed to me like the Madonna ascending to heaven, and in vain does one left behind reach out his arms toward her, in vain does his parting, tearful glance wish hers once more turned downward toward him; she is absorbed solely in the glory that surrounds her, full only of longing for the crown, which hovers over her head." His lamentations avail him nothing, he must repress his overflowing feelings, must return from the intimate *Du* to the courteous *Sie*, and moderate his love to a placid friendship.

Their associations now become more tranquil. He submits to the conventional forms of society, and this pacifies the world. Their own peacefulness and the composure of others gives them, however, new security and new freedom. The more innocent their intercourse begins to seem to the world, as it does to themselves, the more zealously they can cultivate it. Four years pass by. We see Frau von Stein firm in her determination not to allow her relation to Goethe to exceed the bounds of friendship.

Even a rock cannot resist the flood ever dashing against it. Daily association with the noble man, the unlimited confidence which he reposed in her, his unselfish devotion, his thousand-and-one attentions, his touching love of the children, and, finally, the brilliancy of his mind could not but gradually make her wholly and entirely his; and there was need only of exalted moments to betray to him that what she felt for him was more than friendship. Such moments came in the year 1780, and he joyfully confided his happiness to the trees:

Sag' ich's euch, geliebte Bäume,
Die ich ahndevoll gepflanzt,

Als die wunderbarſten Träume
Morgenrötlich mich umtanzt?
Ach, ihr wißt es, wie ich liebe,
Die ſo ſchön mich wiederliebt,
Die den reinſten meiner Triebe
Mir noch reiner wiedergibt.

. . . . .

Bringet Schatten, traget Früchte,
Neue Freude jeden Tag.
Nur daß ich ſie dichte, dichte,
Dicht bei ihr genießen mag.*

But as yet his happiness rests more on sure indications than on unequivocal certainty. The latter he receives in the spring of 1781. To the dear woman's confession of her love he answers with deep earnestness: "My soul has grown fast to thine; I do not care to waste words; thou knowest that I am inseparably bound to thee and that no power above or beneath can part me from thee. I would there were some vow or sacrament that could make me openly and legally thine, how much it would mean to me! And my novitiate was surely long enough for mature consideration. Adieu. I cannot write *Sie* any longer, just as for a little while I could not say *Du*."

A new springtime of love has begun for him, and new words and pictures ever pour from his soul in glorification of his beloved. His prose becomes poetry, his love ardour, worship.

"The Jews have phylacteries which they bind about their

* Need I tell you, cherished trees,
Which I planted hope-entranced,
When most wondrous fantasies
Rosy-dawn-like round me danced?
How I love her, well ye know,
Who loves me so tenderly,
Who my bosom's purest glow
Purer still returns to me.

. . . . .

Bring new joy with every day,
Fruitage bear and shade provide.
Oh, that I enjoy them may,
Nestled closely by her side!

arms when they pray, and so do I wind thy fair band about my arm when I direct my prayer to thee and wish to partake of thy goodness, wisdom, moderation, and patience. I beg thee on bended knee, finish thy work, make me wholly good."

"Thy love is to me like the morning and evening star; it sets after the sun and rises before the sun,—yea, like a pole-star, that never sets, but weaves an ever-living garland above our heads. I pray that in all my path of life the gods may never obscure it."

. . . Seit ich von Dir bin,
Scheint mir des ſchnellſten Lebens lärmende Bewegung
Nur ein leichter Flor, durch den ich Deine Geſtalt
Immerfort wie in Wolken erblicke;
Sie leuchtet mir freundlich und treu,
Wie durch des Nordlichts bewegliche Strahlen
Ewige Sterne ſchimmern.*

The marriage of souls, into which Goethe had entered with Frau von Stein, exerted an extraordinary influence over him: "I cannot say and dare not comprehend what a revolution thy love is effecting in my inmost being. It is a condition which, old as I am, I have never before felt." "All my life I have cherished an ideal of how I should like to be loved, and have sought in vain its realisation in elusive dreams; but now that the world is daily becoming clearer to me I find it at last in thee, in a way that I can never lose it."

Whereas she has hitherto been his pacifying and enlightening confessor, she now becomes to him a deity, sweetening and ennobling his whole existence, either discovering the latent goodness, greatness, and beauty within him, or causing them to well forth in greater abundance

*. . . Since last we met
Seems the noisy motion of intensest life
But a filmy veil through which thy form I see,
As it hovers ever in a bank of cloud;
It sends me kindly, faithful light,
As through the flash of the northern aurora
Glisten the eternal stars.

and fruitfulness. "Thou only one, to whom I need give nothing that I may find everything in thee" (March 20–21, 1782). To him she becomes accordingly the personification of the highest things in the natural and spiritual world. Beloved, muse, sun, purity, truth, beauty, poetry blend into one in his mind, and by singing of these majestic conceptions and things he can at the same time in his poetry pay homage to his beloved. At first sight nothing is more unlike the personality of Frau von Stein than the religious epic of humanity, *Die Geheimnisse*, and its introduction, the beautiful stanzas afterwards placed at the beginning of Goethe's works under the title *Zueignung*. And yet there is an intimate connection between them, as we know from the poet's own words. "I hope thou hast now the beginning of the poem," he writes to her August 11, 1784; "thou wilt take from it what is meant for thee. It was indeed a pleasure to me to tell thee in this way how much I love thee." Twelve days later he writes: "I love the poem so much, because in it I can speak under a thousand forms of thee, and of my love for thee, without anybody but thee perceiving it." In the fragment, *Die Geheimnisse*, we ourselves are unable to discover any reference to Frau von Stein, unless perchance the cross with roses as a symbol of love may be construed as one. Out of the *Zueignung*, however, there shines forth with striking clearness to one initiated the image of her glorified personality. The Madonna who ascended to heaven, without taking pity on the one left behind with hands outstretched toward her, has graciously turned toward him again in her glory, and out of the hand of truth bestows upon him peace, enlightenment, and the veil of poetry. There is not a line in the dialogue between the poet and the divine muse which has not its parallel in Goethe's letters or poems to his loved one; indeed, many of them are better fitted for a dialogue between the earthly prototypes than for that between the poetic copies. A great many other compositions, both large and small, are monuments erected by Goethe to his love for her. When

we come to the consideration of *Iphigenie* and *Tasso* it will meet our eyes once more in poetic beauty.

What we have said in general about the significance of Charlotte von Stein to Goethe by no means exhausts the amount of benefit which he derived from their intimate association. Through their frequent, at times daily, conversations and through her uncommon talents and education she becomes the wise, thoughtful companion of his entire intellectual life. He reads with her Spinoza's *Ethica* and Buffon's *Époques de la Nature*, demonstrates to her conic sections and microscopic preparations, becomes absorbed with her in the bony structure of man, and in the secrets of plant life, in the orbits of the stars, and in the history of the earth's crust, reads with her the literatures of ancient and modern times, and grants her uninterrupted access to the poetic workshop of his creating genius. She is to him the chief and dearest public, to whom he first unveils the new-born children of his muse, as she not infrequently is the only public he has in mind while engaged in poetic creation. Such a communion of spirits it had never before been his lot to enjoy. "How glad I am," he exclaims on one occasion, "that thou art interested in everything, and that I find in thee a dear companion for all my undertakings." It gave him a foretaste of the noblest happiness of wedded life, and we can understand why, in this feeling of happiness, he says it would wreck his life if he were to part from his beloved; why he weeps bitter tears when he merely thinks of the possibility of losing her; and why, in order to avert the envy of the gods, he will throw the ring she has given him into the water. "The envy of the gods." His premonition was only too correct. With the development of things and of his own personality there grew up implacable powers, too mighty for him, which were destined first to cast shadows over the noble intimacy and then to bury it.

But before passing to these painful final stages let us consider how the lover carries out the "world rôle," which he has undertaken with so much daring and so much joy.

# XXII

## THE MINISTER

Goethe's political education—Extensive intercourse with statesmen—Rare power and habit of observation—Attitude toward literature read—Karl August's education—Description of the duchy—Goethe educates the Duke up to his ideas of government—Method and results—The Duke's reception of his guidance—Goethe often misunderstood—The Weimar factotum—Lends willing hand in times of need—Introduces order into War Department—Reforms Treasury Department—Social and political reforms planned, but only partially carried out—In international politics—Visit to Berlin—Weimar's dangerous position—League of Princes.

GOETHE brought to his office a much broader political education than is commonly supposed. If a knowledge of public law and actual conditions is the first qualification of a statesman, and especially of one who is called to a position of authority, Goethe was eminently qualified. Early in life he had been made acquainted with the public law of the German Empire and individual states by his father and the family friends, Assessor Olenschlager, Reineck, resident of the Electorate of Saxony, and Hüsgen, accredited privy councillor to various princes of the Empire. This knowledge was supplemented by university study and residence at the Imperial Chamber. His associations in his grandfather's house had given him an instructive insight into practical statecraft. Not only did he there become familiar with the machinery of his native state, small though it was, but from this point of vantage he extended his observations to other German and foreign states, in so far as they had dealings with Frankfort.

Especially during the Seven Years' War had the imperial city come into touch with the greater powers of Europe, and young Goethe, as a grandson of the chief magistrate, had formed clearer conceptions of their military and diplomatic activities, their influential men and their several strengths than many a mature man possessed, who had acquired his information from newspapers and books. As time went on, his personal acquaintance with high officials widened. Among them we may mention the great Darmstadt minister, Karl Friedrich von Moser, whose *Herr und Diener* had strongly influenced Goethe as a boy; Military Councillor Merck and Privy Councillor Hesse, both likewise of Darmstadt; Chancellor of the Electorate of Treves von Laroche of Ehrenbreitstein; Councillor of Finance of the Electorate of the Palatinate Fritz Jacobi of Düsseldorf, who was not only a sentimental poetising philosopher, but also a thorough political economist with ideas of sweeping reform; former Minister of the Electorate of Mainz von Groschlag of Dieburg; the Baden Minister von Edelsheim of Karlsruhe, one of the most eminent statesmen of Germany in that period, and his subaltern, Superior Judge J. G. Schlosser, Goethe's brother-in-law, one of the most distinguished officials having to do with affairs of general interest to the margraviate. To these may be added the many experienced statesmen whom Goethe met in Wetzlar.

It would be wrong to suppose that Goethe conversed with these men about none but belletristic or purely human things; on the contrary, from manifold indications we may take it for granted that statecraft was a theme often and seriously discussed. His political education was due, however, less to early instruction and personal intercourse than to his study of countries and peoples. To this he brought an interest as great as his talent. His extraordinary imagination was accompanied by an extraordinary power of objective and penetrative observation. While other mortals usually receive only a fragmentary conception and impression of real conditions, they were revealed to his open eyes and impressed upon his open mind

in their entirety. Even when, as a boy, he was sent by his father to the craftsmen, he did not merely watch them at their work, but looked into their business and social conditions and sought to form general ideas of the mutual influences of occupation and life. This was his method everywhere and at all times. Hence Fräulein von Klettenberg was fully justified in saying to his mother: "When your Wolfgang goes to Mainz, he brings back more knowledge than others returning from Paris or London." What pains he took in Alsatia to become acquainted with general economic conditions, the mines, smelting-works, factories, etc., we have already seen. Elsewhere, too, especially in Saxony, we can see that he made good use of time and opportunity for the same purpose.

His rare knowledge of the real factors of the life of the people and of the state gradually made him less and less susceptible to general doctrines and artificial ideals of state, such as were nurtured in France and reflected in Haller's *Usong* or Wieland's *Der goldene Spiegel*. He failed to see how, with such abstractions as a starting-point, particular institutions, existing under definite conditions, could be improved. Such a book as Möser's *Patriotische Phantasien* must, on the other hand, have appealed to him very strongly. Here a man in practical life had started from actual conditions, and out of his mature experience had made suggestions for improvement, first of all in his own immediate vicinity, that of Osnabrück. He had investigated the questions of how best to promote agriculture and trade, and prevent too deep indebtedness; how to find the proper mean between complete freedom and complete bondage of the individual with respect to the disposal of his person and his property; what was the most feasible system of poor laws; whether foreign competition was to be tolerated and reciprocal free trade granted; whether colonists should be induced to immigrate; whether the interior cities should not act independently of seaports and of England in their transmarine commerce, the neighbouring estates of the realm unite in common enterprises instead of

secretly fighting each other, and the imperial diets and dietines be devoted less to petty formalities and more to trade and traffic; how the constitutions of cities might be reformed, and a large number of other subjects, now limiting himself to minutiæ and now rising to exalted points of view.

In these reflections, to which Möser's daughter gave the infelicitous title, *Patriotische Phantasien*, Goethe found practical statecraft, and they enkindled his own patriotic fantasies. For it was easy for him to see that Möser's suggestions and method could also be made fruitful for other German states. He was enthusiastic in the expression of his gratitude to Möser's daughter for the publication of her father's essays. "I carry them about with me; whenever and wherever I open them I have a feeling of satisfaction, and hundreds of wishes, hopes, and plans evolve themselves in my soul" (December 28, 1774).

He had only recently met Karl August, Crown Prince of Weimar, and presented to him an eloquent report on Möser's book. The Prince must have been not a little astonished to see with what warmth and technical knowledge the author of *Werther*, whom he may have considered an idealistic dreamer, spoke of the most real things of life, and how clearly the most complicated political and economic conditions unravelled themselves before this poet's eye, and with what discretion and certainty he made the practical application of the Lower Saxon conditions, which served Möser as a foundation, to those in Upper Saxony, and, by implication, to those in Weimar. Goethe's explanations must have had all the greater weight with the young Prince, as the latter at that time had had little experience in the world and in the actual foundations of government. Karl August had been crammed full of general theories, history of jurisprudence and paragraphs of law by his teachers—among them unpractical Wieland, who "walked about in the flower gardens of his *Golden Mirror*"—and had less insight into the reality of things than many a burgher's son. Minister von Fritsch had, accordingly, as early as 1773, expressed his opinion to the Duchess that it was not advisable

to allow the Prince to ascend from the school bench to the throne. All that paid teachers with their everlasting lessons could drum into a young prince about public law was not sufficient preparation for reigning; a knowledge of the world and of business was indispensable. Therefore he proposed that the instructors be dismissed and the Duke taken into the Privy Council, where he could see men at work and perhaps do something himself, and where he could acquire a knowledge of all those things which his teachers could not teach him. But as a consequence of Anna Amalia's objections the Prince was not admitted to the Council until September, 1774, and then only temporarily, for between this date and October, 1775, he spent eight months away from home. Consequently when the young Prince, after his nuptial festivities, took the reins of government in his own hands, he was not only very unfamiliar with the country—the same was true of Goethe—but he also lacked the experience and training necessary to enable him to grasp quickly the conditions in city and country and to form a sound judgment of them. Goethe possessed precisely these qualifications, and, as a consequence, was at first to a remarkable degree Karl August's superior, as was clearly shown by the ready subordination of the otherwise so independent Prince to the will of his minister.

Goethe entered the highest branch of the government of a country that was small and poor. On its 733 square miles lived about 100,000 inhabitants [66] in 22,000 families. The chief source of living was agriculture, which, with the meagre mountain soil and severe climate, brought small returns. Some woollen and linen weaving, stocking-making, and glass manufacture were the modest industries of the country. Small as was the duchy, it was neither connected in territory nor united in government. It was divided into no less than four political divisions, each with more or less independence: the Principality of Weimar, the Jena District, the Principality of Eisenach, and the Henneberg

Districts, or the so-called Oberland, which extended into Franconia. These diminutive divisions were in many ways further split up in administration and territory. Bits of foreign territory were scattered about everywhere between sections of the "fatherland," and several institutions were held in common with the territory belonging to the Ernesti branch of the Saxon dynasty, for example, the University and the Superior Court of Jena.

It was a hopeless undertaking to govern the scattered and surrounded members of this petty state. Nevertheless Goethe devoted himself to it with genuine enthusiasm. To establish comparative prosperity in this country and a free and worthy position for its inhabitants seemed to him worth the effort. Furthermore, there was the hope that the duchy might possibly become the nucleus of a reform extending to the greater fatherland.

Goethe could not think it possible to accomplish his purposes otherwise than by means of an enlightened, self-restrained absolutism devoted to the welfare of the country. Hence the most important preliminary condition of his influence and of the whole future of the country was that the youthful Duke, inspired with the best purposes, but at times overweening, or too impetuous, too restless, or too indulgent of his hobbies, should be trained to rule according to the above standard. How Goethe undertook this work, even before he entered the office, has already been indicated. After he became a servant of the state he continued it with increased energy and earnestness. The more absolute the Prince was, the less any one phase of his conduct could be neglected. Goethe accordingly laid a firm hand on him everywhere, no matter whether it was a question of his family life or of his flirtations, of his passions for dogs, horses, soldiers, hunts, or of his official bearing and measures. A few diary notes will bring this more vividly before the minds of our readers than any amount of pragmatic description:

Jan. 10, 1779.—"Evening after the concert a radical declaration to the Duke about Crone [Corona]." Feb. 1,

1779.—"Council. The Duke talked too much. Dined with the Duke. After dinner some advice about too much talking, revealing secrets, compromising his dignity, speaking, when excited, of things that ought not to be uttered. Also about the military *Makaronis* [dallying]." Aug. 2, 1779.—"Duke came at ten o'clock. We discussed unspeakable things. . . . About court, wife, other people, about knowing people. Explained to him, why this and that was so hard for him, why he should not meddle so much with details." Jan. 19, 1782.—"Dined with the Duke. Spoke very seriously and vigorously about economy and against a number of false ideas which he cannot get out of his head." A passage from one of the few letters which have been preserved of their correspondence before 1786 is also instructive: "Whatever turn your affair may take, conduct yourself with moderation, and, if it becomes absolutely necessary, withdraw from it, without quarrelling with those whom you have drawn into it and compromised" (October 28, 1784). Goethe also used poetry to influence the Duke, now in a veiled way, now openly and directly, as in *Ilmenau* (September 3, 1783), the strangest, frankest birthday poem that ever minister dedicated to his lord. In it he addresses to the Duke the great precept which, in his mind, is fundamental for a sovereign: "Restrain thyself, learn to forego."

One may say that during the decade from 1776 to 1786 Goethe meditated almost day by day how he might guide the Duke aright. At times he noted down the results of his meditation as points of view for his own conduct toward the Duke. In December, 1778, for instance: "Conversation with the Duke about order, police, and laws. Different opinion. Mine must not be expressed in words. It might easily be misunderstood and become dangerous." In July, 1779: "New conduct in the future. Caution with the Duke. Not to depart from a certain bearing, and to deter the Duke from doing anything for himself; for he is still very inexperienced, especially with strangers."

A journey to Switzerland in the autumn and winter of

1779 marks a great step forward in the development of the Duke. Goethe counted on the effect of isolation with him for months, on the influence of sublime nature, and of Lavater, whose contact, after the manner of the old prophets, was consecrating and purifying. His expectations were in no wise disappointed. Karl August's inward fermentation was here completed, and the wild youth became a man. Toward the end of the journey Goethe expressed the conviction that a new epoch was dawning in the life of the Duke. After their return he notes: "Everybody is very well pleased with the Duke." Whereas before the journey the project had been looked upon by Weimar society as one of Goethe's crazy notions, as a Storm-and-Stress fancy, it was now pronounced a master-stroke.

Karl August had become clearer-headed, more composed, more harmonious in nature, but the process was not as yet complete. In the years that followed, Goethe still found many faults to correct in him, and we still hear him utter many a sharp criticism. But, on the whole, he experienced great joy over the splendid development of the Prince.

The Duke, far from ever being sensitive on the point of Goethe's mentorship, recognised gratefully at all times how much he owed to the poet's wise and devoted guidance. In February, 1783, when a long-wished heir to his throne was born he wrote to Merck the characteristic words: "Now a solid hook has been driven in, on which I can hang up my pictures. With the help of Goethe and good fortune I shall so finish painting them that posterity shall perchance say: '*Ed egli fu pittore.*' "

Unfortunately Goethe's own official career has not yet been satisfactorily investigated; partly because the documents are too few, and partly because they have not been examined critically. Hence we are dependent chiefly upon occasional data in letters and diaries.

There can be no greater misconception than to think that Goethe was essentially court poet and *directeur des plaisirs*, and only incidentally an official. To be sure, it is

easy to fall into this error because of the lengthy descriptions of Goethe's part in amateur theatricals, masquerades, and similar entertainments. As a matter of fact, these things occupy a constantly decreasing share of his time and interest during the decade from 1776 to 1786 and become gradually more a burden than a joy. The central thing in his life during these years is his political calling, to which he devotes all his strength.

His sphere of influence extended far beyond his office, which at first gave him only a moderate amount of authority. As Privy Councillor of Legation and youngest member of the Council he had no share in the direction or management of affairs; he merely made reports, and that only on such matters as the president, Minister von Fritsch, referred to him. With the aid of the Duke he doubtless had many of his opinions and suggestions adopted as resolutions. It may well have been in the interest of both that Goethe by virtue of his office should be able immediately and regularly to put into force his desires and opinions in certain departments of the government. Consequently in January, 1779, the Duke bestowed upon him, in addition to his position in the Council, the direction of the War Commission and the Commission of Highways and Canals, and soon after made him an actual privy councillor, or, as we say nowadays, a minister, raising him to equal rank with Fritsch. To the three offices was added a fourth and very important one in 1782, the presidency of the Chamber of Finance, which gave him control of all finances and the management of all domains and forests.* Beside the many tasks imposed upon him by these offices—and in a petty state they involved going into smallest details—he was further occupied with all the calls which the Duke's confidence made upon him.

Accordingly we see the poet struggling with an infinite number of most varied problems. He studies the regulations of the excise and of the pawnshop, and the rules gov-

* In the same year, at the suggestion of the Duke, he, much against his own wish, received from the German Emperor a patent of nobility.

erning the manufacture of cloth, devises new rules for the fire department, dictates reflections on a new bankrupt law, levies recruits, carries on a correspondence about the leather breeches of a Hussar, issues orders concerning the posts on the Weimar promenade, is busy with the construction of roads and canals, reformation of poorhouses, division of estates, irrigation of meadows, reopening of old mines and quarries, appointing of professors in the University of Jena, equipping of scientific institutions, prevention of damage to farms by game, balancing of finances, and a thousand other things. He is not satisfied with what he can learn from documents, but, if at all possible, seeks to hear and see for himself; not merely that he may get clearer ideas of things, but, as he correctly remarks on one occasion, because they present entirely different aspects when looked at from below and from above.

Whenever an immediate personal interference seems to him to be needed at a particular place he shuns neither pains nor danger. He often rides to a fire miles away and takes personal charge of the attempt to put it out. With what cordial sympathy and what bravery one example out of many may show. On the 26th of June, 1780, he reports to Frau von Stein: "Yesterday I was in Ettersburg. . . . The cry of fire in Gross-Brembach called me away and I was soon in the flames. After such long dry weather, and with an unfavourable wind the fury of the fire was uncontrollable. In such a case one feels how single-handed one is, and yet how the people have enough good practical sense to make some effort. The most vexatious people in such circumstances are, as always, those who see only what is not being done, and consequently confuse those who are doing the most necessary things. I admonished, begged, consoled, pacified, and then turned my whole care to the church, which was still in danger when I arrived, and where, beside the building, a great store of produce belonging to the Duke would have been lost. . . . Nobody would dip water from the pond because the flames from the nearest houses were driven out over it in eddies by the wind. I stepped

up and cried: 'It can be done, it can be done, children,' and immediately some of them were there and dipped out water, but I soon had to leave my place, because at best one could endure it only a few moments. My eyebrows are singed and the water boiling in my shoes scalded my toes; after midnight I lay down on the bed for a little rest."

In the same manner he lends personal aid in times of flood. Hardly has he heard of the perilous breaking up of the ice in Jena on February 29, 1784, when he hastens thither and evolves order and precision out of the general anxiety and confusion. "Everybody is running around in confusion," he writes to his beloved; "the officers are not prepared for emergencies, the sufferers know not what to do, and the others do nothing. . . . I am not altogether useless here, so I shall stay." He remained in Jena five days. What he accomplished we can only conjecture from the words of the Duke, who made great demands upon manly energy. He had followed Goethe to Jena, and on the 6th of March wrote to Merck: "Goethe conducted himself very nobly during the danger here, and made the very best arrangements. Nobody was lost in the water here."

That Goethe on such occasions gladly lent energetic assistance is not surprising. Work in the open air, the sympathy which he felt as man and poet in such times of disaster, the immediate visible results, were enough in themselves to make him enjoy doing what he did. But we find him taking the same delight in his office, where even the beams seemed to weigh him down, in the midst of documents and a multitude of annoyances great and small.

When he took hold of the War Commission, for example, he found it in a terrible state of neglect. The officials were careless, the system demoralised, and the accounts and rescripts in confusion and disorder; but he was not discouraged. "I shall make it as neat as if the pigeons had picked it up." And after two and a half years he not only had everything filed away in most perfect order, but the personnel of the department was reorganised and so well trained that everything went on with smoothness and

regularity, and he had, furthermore, in spite of all the Duke's military dallying, had the army of Weimar reduced [67] by half, viz., from 600 to 310 men. He was so pleased with these results that he noted in his diary on August 15, 1781: "War commission. Recapitulated to myself what I have accomplished in this department. Now I should not be afraid to undertake to introduce order into a far greater, indeed into several, and may God grant me the opportunity and the courage to do so!" An admirable wish in a man who, so to speak, must also have felt his calling as a poet, and who already had so much to carry that it often seemed as though his knees would give way under him, so that he was obliged to urge himself on with such words as: "Iron patience!" "Stony endurance!"

The opportunity very soon offered to undertake a greater department. Kalb had managed the Chamber of Finance very badly. Consequently the Duke dismissed him from the office in June, 1782, and, as we have already said, intrusted Goethe with it. Both thought it would only be for the interim, but it proved to be for a long period. Here, again, the great amount of labour naturally involved in the office was further increased by the confused state in which it was transferred to Goethe. He felt, too, what a heavy burden he was assuming, and hence, as the most conscientious of the conscientious, admonished himself that he must now be in earnest, in deep earnest. With the presidency of the Chamber he had got into the heart of the administration; and among the many hard tasks which it brought him the hardest was his struggle with the Duke. The Duke was not a spendthrift, but was a generous prince, who liked to give with a full hand and was fond of extending hospitality, but was unwilling carefully to adjust the expenses of hunting and travelling to the income of the civil list. As a result he usually spent more than his privy purse received, and the Chamber had to cover the deficit.[68] Goethe put a stop to this mismanagement. When he noticed after six months that Bertuch, the Duke's privy purse, had already drawn more than was due him for this period, he

checked further payments and gave Bertuch clearly to understand that he must arrange his budget accordingly for the remainder of the year. "For I must have things in order on St. John's Day or resign." He has his way, too; and at the end of April, 1783, announces to Knebel with satisfaction: "My finances are going better than I thought a year ago. I am meeting with good fortune and success in my administration, but am holding most tenaciously to my plans and principles." In August, 1785, he even persuaded the Duke, for the sake of economy, to exclude his cavaliers from the daily Court table. By this measure Goethe wounded himself in his own most tender spot. It restored the Master of the Horse to his family, and Goethe's intimate associations with Frau von Stein were painfully disturbed.

The savings which Goethe achieved in the national and ducal budgets were to be used for the support of the poor, whose misery weighed heavy upon his heart, for the extraordinary needs of the University of Jena, further, perhaps, for the commutation of feudal and ecclesiastical rights, which were a heavy burden upon the small tenant. He was planning great social and political reforms,[69] such as had been partly begun and partly carried out in Denmark, Portugal, and Austria. Liberating the peasants from socage and tithes, transforming the possessions of the peasantry and landlords into free, divisible property, levying the taxes according to earning power,—such were approximately the chief aims which he pursued, aside from the general amelioration of conditions. This meant a stubborn fight with the privileged classes, and economical management for years to come; and whereas the young Duke felt somewhat in favour of the one, he was little inclined to the other. Consequently the great plans never passed the stage of good purposes, and Goethe had to be satisfied with the fact that at least some good was, as far as possible, accomplished in particular cases, that economy, care, and humanity were introduced into the government, that the military burden was lightened, roads and canals improved, an extensive system of irrigation and drainage

established, the damage from game decreased, mining at Ilmenau brought back to life, and the institutions of art and science enlarged and more richly equipped.

Although Goethe had to give up his ultimate and most promising purposes in domestic policy, he was able to carry out similar plans in international relations. Here he exercised control in common with the Duke, but without the aid or knowledge of the Privy Council. Of course only questions of broad policy are here meant, for it was neither possible nor necessary to keep secret from other members of the Council the secondary matters which had to be settled with other countries, especially with the neighbouring Ernestinian principalities. Goethe often acted as negotiator in these matters too, and visited more than once on such missions the courts of the Thuringian princes.

That little Weimar had to face questions of important international policy in the decade from 1776 to 1786 was due to the peculiar aspect of conditions in Germany at that time and to Goethe's and the Duke's desire for real activity. In the early part of 1778, after the Wittelsbach line in Bavaria had become extinct, Austria, on the basis of hereditary claims, had compelled the successor to the throne, Karl Theodor von Pfalz-Sulzbach, to cede to her the Upper Palatinate and Lower Bavaria. This fact had created unrest in Prussia and the smaller German states, and Prussia began to make preparations to compel Austria, by force of arms, if necessary, to cede back the annexed Bavarian territories. The experience of the Seven Years' War had taught Weimar that in case of war between Austria and Prussia she, too, would have to suffer painfully. Hence the duchy had reason to be somewhat alarmed. But, with all the worry, it afforded Goethe a certain agreeable excitement to see the Weimar boat at length drifting out upon the high sea. "God be thanked, I am in fine spirits and my life is free!" he exclaimed with regard to this possibility, in a letter of the 18th of March. With things in such a state, it must have seemed to the Duke desirable to have an

early definite statement of Prussia's intentions; how far the King was in earnest about the war, what Berlin thought of Weimar's neutrality or an eventual alliance, what demands would be made, etc. Accordingly the Duke set out with Goethe on the 10th of May, proceeded first to Dessau, where they took counsel with the Prince, and thence to Berlin. Goethe here saw for the first time a really great city, a city numbering 100,000 more inhabitants than the greatest he had hitherto seen. He was amazed. Small and quiet as it seems to us in the descriptions and pictures of the time, he found in it life, wealth, and splendour. The impression was deepened by the preparations for war; "Men, horses, carriages, cannon, equipments, swarms of them all." He visited the porcelain factory, the opera house, the Catholic Hedwigskirche, the arsenal, the Tiergarten. He dined with Prince Heinrich in the company of dozens of generals. He did not see the King, who was in Silesia; but he felt very close to him, when he saw the character of his surroundings: his gold, silver, marble, monkeys, parrots, and torn curtains. He also heard the great King discussed by his own scoundrels. He saw, further, on a great scale, the phenomena of unchained egotism: bartering, deception, intrigue, hypocrisy, cringing, haughtiness, pettiness, jealousy, all the disgusting bubbles that a crisis was apt to bring to the surface of the old-time European diplomacy, and the commanding power and despotism of an autocrat. "This much I can say, the greater the world, the nastier the farce, and I swear, no obscenity or asininity of buffoonery is as disgusting as the actions of the great, the middle rank, and the small mingled together. I have implored the gods to preserve my spirit and straightforwardness to the end" (to Frau von Stein, May 19th). After a sojourn of five days he returns from the corruption of the Prussian capital to his innocent Weimar. The results of the negotiations and inquiries in Berlin are not known. However, Weimar observes neutrality when the war breaks out.

It was to be foreseen that Weimar, either directly or

indirectly, would suffer from the consequences of the war. This foreseen danger was doubtless Karl August's determining motive for putting Goethe at the head of the War Department at the beginning of the new year. And their fears were well founded. In the winter the Prussian King requested permission to enlist soldiers in Weimar. Even before negotiations were completed, Prussian Hussars came to begin the recruiting. The situation was extremely precarious. Goethe prepared a memorial, containing an exhaustive discussion of the consequences of the Prussian demand, in which he came to the conclusion that, no matter what position they took with respect to it, perilous results would grow out of it. Recruitments are in themselves a great evil, he said; "Whatever concessions are made to Prussia will have to be made to Austria also, and thus the evil will be doubled. A refusal may provoke Prussia to violence. In short, the small state in its weakness is in a sorry plight in the presence of the great powers, and from an appeal to the German Imperial Diet one may expect nothing but 'empty sympathy.'" He also raised the question, whether it might not be well to form an alliance with the other states that were threatened with similar measures, and in union find strength for resistance. Such a step would at all events make a good impression. For other happy circumstances might also conspire to draw the princes out of their isolation and inactivity and unite them in a permanent common federation. With this step Goethe set out resolutely to gain the point upon which he had long had his eyes fixed, the point from which he could transform the "miserable constitution" of the Empire into an organism capable of living, and giving promise of prosperity to all and protection for the small against the great.

The danger of enlistments vanished with the early end of the war, but Goethe and Karl August pursued still further the thought of uniting[70] the small and secondary states of Germany. But it seems that for several years they were unable to carry the friendly princes beyond the

point of academic discussion, and when the movement, under the leadership of Baden, was finally set on foot, Frederick the Great, quite contrary to the original intention, got control of it, and he wished to give the federation of princes a firmer military basis. Goethe was little in sympathy with this turn of affairs; for he feared not so much Prussia as the Prussian King, whose want of consideration Weimar had more than once been made to feel.

In the summer of 1780 he spoke in the *Vögel* of the Black Eagle with his ever-ready claws. Even if the King should perhaps not formally swallow up the small states, still there was ground for fearing that he, by virtue of the federation, would lay upon them heavy burdens which would necessarily ruin Goethe's policy of economy and reform, and that he would treat them not as peers but as vassals. Meanwhile Austria was pursuing such a greedy policy that no choice was left for the small states. In 1780 she had brought the Archbishopric of Cologne and the Bishopric of Münster under her influence; from that year on she had shrewdly lamed [71] the Imperial Diet; finally, in 1785, she had attempted to gain control of the whole of Bavaria by means of a barter with Burgundy. This made it seem clear that "German liberty" was threatened with the greatest danger, not from Prussia but from Austria, and that protection must be sought under the wings of the Black Eagle, even if his claws should be uncannily displayed. In view of this situation, Goethe could no longer oppose [72] entrance into Frederick's federation; but he did insist that Karl August sign only the chief treaty with Prussia, which aimed at united action in the Imperial Diet, but not the secret military articles. Only later, when the days of Frederick the Great seemed to be numbered, and his peace-loving nephew and successor could be reckoned with, did the Duke agree to the military alliance, with the saving clause, "according to circumstances." Karl August based great hopes on the federation, if it should be conducted loyally and peaceably. He considered it the means of

regenerating the whole fatherland and instilling new life into its almost extinct public spirit and greatly diminished power. His sanguine expectations were not realised. Goethe proved to be right in his less hopeful opinion of the federation of German princes under the hegemony of Prussia. But whether a federation according to his plan would have accomplished more, or lasted longer, is doubtful. At any rate Goethe deserves the credit that he, the poet, was the only[73] man at the time who seized an auspicious moment with quick energy and attempted to cure the sickly German Empire.

As Weimar, until 1785, was the soul of the movement toward federation, and as there were during this time negotiations with a large number of the estates of the Empire, Goethe found even the foreign relations a not inconsiderable burden. For the sake of secrecy he even deprived himself of the luxury of a secretary, and hence all the documents referring to the federation are in Goethe's or the Duke's handwriting.

If we glance back over the whole wide field of Goethe's official activity we can understand why Herder, in 1782, called him "the Weimar factotum," and Knebel, in 1784, "the backbone of things."

# XXIII

## EGMONT

Connection between *Götz* and *Egmont*—Demonic element in latter—Origin and composition—Defects in plot—Demonic heedlessness the sole motive—Egmont's character and his rôle in the drama—Other characters—Charm of the play in spite of its defects.

"LOCK your hearts more carefully than your doors. The age of deception is coming, and it has been given free rein. The vile shall rule with cunning, and the noble shall fall into their nets." In these dying words of Götz was given out the program for *Egmont*.[74] In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe has therefore connected *Egmont* with *Götz*, and has placed it immediately after *Götz* in his collected works.

Indeed Egmont and Götz are twin brothers. Both are noble men who perish in the struggle with evil governmental powers. "Freedom" is the last word of each in his prison. While Götz strives to gain freedom and to better existing conditions by interference on his own authority, Egmont is satisfied with the freedom to live on as usual within chartered rights, or, in other words, he fights only against the degeneration of conditions. Egmont, therefore, is much more conservative than Götz, just as Goethe himself had meanwhile become much more conservative. The variations on the theme of liberty, such as Egmont offers, could hardly have stimulated the poet to elaborate them into an independent drama. But another strong motive was added, which Goethe calls the demonic. He attempted at different times to explain what he meant by the demonic,

but owing to the indefiniteness of this neither divine nor diabolical factor, which cannot be grasped by the reason and understanding, and which seemed to him to pervade even inanimate things, it was impossible for him, with all his explanations, to express himself in a clear and comprehensible manner. This much is certain, however, that he considered it, in the case of man, a mysterious power, which fills man with unlimited confidence in himself, and in this way makes him capable of great and successful undertakings, as it may also lead him to misfortune or to ruin. Of his own relation to the demonic he says that it was not a part of his nature, but that he had been under its sway. This simply means that at certain epochs he was controlled by it, but that his nature was constituted fortunately enough to protect him against its destructive tendency. The fortunate gift of nature that protected him was poetry.

Now just at the time when *Egmont* was coming into being the demonic power had seized him again, and he had recourse to his approved remedy. As he expresses it, he sought "to save himself from the dread power by taking refuge behind a picture." This picture he found in the unfortunate hero of the Dutch struggle for liberty, in noble, brave, kind, care-free Egmont. In order to make the historical Egmont as true a reflection of himself as possible, he transformed the mature father of a family into an unmarried youth and intensified his somnambulistic habit of enjoying the pleasures of life for the moment, totally oblivious of the lurking dangers, to which he eventually falls a victim.

In what did the demonic consist, which frightened the poet at that time? We need only mention the year in which *Egmont* originated in order to have the answer. It was the year 1775. Goethe, driven by a demonic power, and contrary to his most settled purpose, had become entangled in a new passionate love affair, that with Lili, and was more deeply involved than ever before. He soon foresaw the misfortune which must arise if he continued his somnambulistic walk along this dangerous way. The

vain flight to Switzerland had made the demonic power inherent in that passion seem doubly uncanny to him, and he sought to save himself by means of poetry, by writing *Egmont*. Allowing his poetic double to keep on the way to the end, to the abyss which swallows him up and with him his sweetheart, he was terrified at the picture and experienced a tragic *catharsis* in his own soul.

Knowing well the liberating and purifying power of poetry, Goethe worked during the final months of his betrothal to Lili, from August to October, with extraordinary zeal. Skipping over from the exposition to the chief scenes, he had proceeded so far with the composition that when he went to Weimar there probably remained only a few gaps of inconsiderable length and importance. By moving away from Lili's demonic presence he lost his interest in the drama. A new life made new subjects more pressing, above all *Iphigenie*, and only after this was finished in its first redaction did he take up *Egmont* again. But, having become inwardly estranged from the play, being now governed by stricter artistic standards, and having little leisure at his disposal, he worked at it, patching and improving, for three years, and finished it at the end of April, 1782; but so unsatisfactorily that in 1786 he again pronounced it unfinished and felt he must take it with him to Italy for further revision. In the summer of 1787 in Rome, in the midst of landscape drawing, modelling of antique heads, and the study of Michael Angelo, he revised the play, but in such a way that we are unable to detect any Italian influence in it. On the contrary, it betrays throughout the style of the last years in Frankfort and the first in Weimar. His criticism of the finished play is, that it was left rather as it could be than as it should be. "It was a hard undertaking. I never should have believed I should finish it." Naturally enough. As Goethe had originally planned it, it was hard for one with a mature understanding of art to finish. Not yet entirely rid of the esthetic theories of the Storm-and-Stress period, and yielding to his own personal impulses, he had intended to

give in *Egmont* nothing but a character sketch of a great man in dramatic form, so that in this respect also it became a companion piece to *Götz*. While *Egmont* is superior to *Götz* in concentration, *Götz* surpasses *Egmont* in dramatic interest. In *Götz* we have no centralised plot, but always some action which arouses interest; *Egmont*, on the other hand, has a centralised plot, but it is insignificant, and the interest which is aroused for the time being is due less to the plot than to the characters themselves.

The plot may be told in very few words. Egmont, disregarding all warnings, remains in Brussels, is captured by Alba, and led to the scaffold. It begins at the end of the second act, is obscured in the third, and closes in the fourth.

Goethe almost wantonly neglected every means of rendering the plot complicated.

In the second scene of the first act he makes Margaret of Parma assemble the council of state in order to call Egmont and Orange to account for the existing unrest. "I shall roll the burden of responsibility close enough to them; they shall join me in all earnestness in opposing the evil, or declare that they too are rebels." Other writers, such as Shakespeare or Schiller, would have made much of this motive: a great meeting of the council, a lively give and take, the hero becoming entangled by his too great frankness, etc. But Goethe suggested it only to drop it. Margaret of Parma is secretly in love with Egmont. This is a very happy invention. But instead of developing something out of this motive for the progress of the play, a secret warning against Alba, say, or secret support against him, it, too, is left unemployed. For the poet it is enough if it contributes to his glorification of the picture of Egmont. As there are plenty of other means for the accomplishment of this end, Schiller was able to eliminate the figure of the regent altogether in his adaptation of *Egmont* to the stage, which is still followed in many theatres.

Goethe brings the common people before us three

times. The first time they properly serve to unfold the background of the plot. The second time we see them wrought up by a clever agitator, the third time they are fired by Klärchen's persuasive eloquence to rescue Egmont. In the last two cases we expect some turn in the progress of the action, but each time we are disappointed. The common people remain passive from beginning to end. Apart from the exposition their only purpose is to cast high lights on Egmont and Klärchen. One can only regret that Goethe does not at least have the people stirred from their inactivity by Klärchen in the fifth act. How our interest would be intensified again, and how much greater Klärchen's death would be in battle, at the head of a band of people, than by poison in a quiet attic room! But as in this case Klärchen has no influence on the development of events, so everywhere else. She is, for example, of no weight in Egmont's determination to remain in Brussels. The poet purposely avoided such a complication in order that he might make demonic heedlessness the sole motive of Egmont's ruin. Consequently he put no passion into the relation on Egmont's side. We are all the more surprised, then, when his sweetheart engrosses his whole soul in the prison and appears to him in the glory of a goddess of liberty.

The poet again had it in his power to give the dull fifth act a livelier pulse when he brought Ferdinand, Alba's son, to Egmont in the prison. After the homage which Ferdinand offers to Egmont, we expect him, as Egmont does, to interfere for the liberation of the hero. But nothing of the kind happens. Ferdinand's only function is to wreathe a leaf into Egmont's crown of glory. And yet his active intervention would not only have aroused our flagging interest to the highest pitch, but his death,—for the failure of the attempt to liberate Egmont was a poetical necessity—would have been a splendid tragical atonement for the violence of his father.

That Orange should exert no influence on the course of events was doubtless necessary. But, even if this important

figure were condemned to be a foil for Egmont, Goethe should have been the more careful not to detach the others from the mechanism of the plot. It was the fate of the play that Goethe's thoughts were fixed upon anything but a stirring action rising artistically to a climax. It was his only care to show the hero in the most varied and brilliant lights, and then, when we have grown fond of him, let him be suddenly destroyed as one blinded by the demon.

He sought to attain this end in the simplest way, no matter whether this way were suited to the drama or not. A detailed discussion is demanded only for the manner in which Egmont's character is portrayed. Goethe depicts him with such warm devotion and such perfect art that in the first acts our whole interest is centred in the person of the hero. In the first act he lets us see Egmont through the eyes of the people; in the second, through the eyes of the Government; in the third, through the eyes of love. We see a brilliant, chivalrous figure, a renowned general, stadtholder and prince, who prides himself on being a man. He walks as if the world belonged to him, and yet is friendly, benevolent, and amiable toward everybody. In spite of his serious burdens at home and in the field he has never been seen other than cheerful and open. His heedlessness rises to light-heartedness, but this light-heartedness appears as an amiable ornament, because it flows from his consciousness of power and innocence, as well as from his optimistic philosophy of life and the world. Everybody loves him, takes him as a model, in fact; young and old, men and women, soldiers and citizens. The fact that we catch no glimpse of "great" Egmont himself only keys our suspense higher and higher. The second act begins, but still we must wait. An effective background must first be prepared for Egmont's appearance. A mob quarrelling over the political affairs of the country becomes embroiled in a fierce fight. Egmont appears and the stormy waves subside in a few moments. He separates the quarrellers with kingly dignity and passes on.

The impressive little glimpse of Egmont increases our

desire to see him in a rich unfolding of his nature. The poet gratifies us in the next scene. He makes him dispose of the official letters that have arrived, covering a wide range of things. He answers all briefly and clearly, yet in a manner full of kindness, mercy, and humanity. A warning from Count Oliva against the attacks of the Spaniards he rejects with the high-mindedness of a joyous, brave, pure soul.—Count Oliva had sought to put him on his guard by means of general apprehensions. But how will Egmont act when he hears facts? These are brought by Orange in the next scene, the crown of the whole play. With palpitating heart we follow the conversation of these two great men. Orange informs Egmont that Alba, whose murderous mind he well knows, is on the way with an army, explains to him that this brings the greatest danger for both of them, tells him that he himself intends to escape these dangers by going away from Brussels, begs him warmly and urgently, and finally implores him with tears, to follow. Orange's words are not without effect upon Egmont. The objections which the latter raises are not valid; nevertheless, in his demonic blindness he remains standing upon the soil that crumbles away beneath his feet, and refuses to act. Egmont's inactivity here at the decisive turning-point of the plot shows most strikingly how undramatic was the whole motive upon which Goethe based the play.

From now on our interest must of necessity wane. We see the shadow of death hovering about Egmont and can only follow him with melancholy sympathy to his doom.

The undramatic motive also hindered the action of his enemies. History furnished the poet with the fact that Alba was at first very cordial toward Egmont and the other nobles, and dealt his blows against them only after he had made sure of them. An embodiment of this turn in the fourth act would have greatly increased the interest, but it would have made Egmont's heedlessness appear less demonic. Goethe accordingly made no use of it, making Alba disclose his fearful face at once through his Draconic

orders. Consequently we know from the first how the meeting of Alba and Egmont will turn out, and are only surprised that Alba wastes so many words.

The drama might end with Egmont's arrest at the end of the fourth act; for the fifth act contains only the after convulsions which, in themselves unessential, could easily be supplied by our fancy. Klärchen's suicide has already been suggested in the third act in her words: "So let me die, the world has no joys after this!"

The faults of the play are many and not insignificant; and yet, even if one feels them all, it still possesses great charm. This rests mainly upon the characteristic beauty and vividness of the figures. And here again we see it demonstrated that poetry, as well as the plastic arts, can after all accomplish nothing greater than the creation of well-rounded real men, and that all that we call technique is of secondary importance.

The characters of *Egmont* are not faultless. As Schiller pointed out, for example, it is a weakness in the hero to say: "To bathe away the thoughtful wrinkles from my brow there is still left a friendly remedy"; and Klärchen, who had struck charming natural tones in the first and third acts, speaks in the last act in as elevated a style as if she were an Iphigenia, or a Leonora d'Este. Exaltation does not justify the change in style. It may alter the accent, but not the tone of language. Goethe felt this very clearly when he wrote the prison scene of *Faust*, and governed his style accordingly. Nevertheless, Egmont and Klärchen are among the most beautiful and true characters that our poet ever created.

We have already become closely acquainted with the figure of Egmont. Klärchen is his feminine counterpart, a happy young girl who gladly surrenders herself to the joy of a beautiful moment and wards off all care for the future. Yet she is not superficial nor pleasure-seeking; her aims are serious, and her emotions deep and tender. Poverty, domestic limitations, sewing and cooking, have not wearied or crushed her; she is still the same romp as when she was a

child, and nothing would please her more than to be a man and try her strength out in the world. And so in the moment of need she is braver and more determined than the men of Brussels who gather around her. Like Egmont, she is wholly natural. She cannot be moved first this way and then that by arguments; she must follow her own instincts. Her natural impulses drive her into the arms of Egmont, no less than into the arms of Death. While Egmont is above her because of the splendour of his high position and great influence, she radiates the pleasing shimmer of cordial freshness and charming naïveté. With these qualities she has made a warmer place for herself in the heart of the world than has her great lover.

By the side of Klärchen belongs her aged mother, drawn wholly from life, with her love and indulgence for Klärchen, her vanity, flattered by the fact that Egmont is her daughter's lover, her honour, which cannot but be offended by the relation, and her practical sense, which would prefer ten times over to see Klärchen find a comfortable home as the wife of Brackenburg. Then Brackenburg, the soft, flaccid youth, who eats of the mercies of love, but can neither live nor die—perhaps the most difficult character, and yet very probable, thanks to the poet's art. And further his Spanish pendant, Ferdinand, who vacillates between his dreaded father and his admired enemy; the lapidary personality of Orange, a statue, not a picture; the half Spanish, half Dutch, half masculine, half feminine, clever and yet mediocre regent, Margaret; and, closing the procession, the representatives of the Dutch common people, who with their distinct peculiarities are sketched with true Dutch art. Least successful of all is the delineation of Alba. One can readily see that this character sprang from the fourth act, which Goethe hated. The "hollow-eyed," "monosyllabic," "iron" Toledan ought to have had the pithy style of Orange; but Goethe made him loquacious and rhetorical. It may be that he was led into doing this by the need of broadening out and giving a special lustre to the fourth act, which, according to his plan, was to form the

climax, and by the iambic rhythm which he often attempted here as in the fifth act.

With these characters Goethe constructed a series of most exquisite scenes, especially the first two Klärchen scenes, the scenes among the people, and that between Egmont and Orange. These leave such a profound impression that they make us forget all adverse criticisms of the play.

## XXIV

### JOURNEY TO THE HARZ AND TO SWITZERLAND

Goethe's need of recreation—Reason for travelling in winter—Route to the Harz Mountains—Visit to Plessing—Ascent of the Brocken—Its effect on him—Return to Weimar—Loneliness in the midst of gay life—Letter to his mother announcing visit in compàny with Karl August and Wedel—Off for Switzerland—The party in Goethe's home in Frankfort—Mother's account—Goethe visits Friederike in Sesenheim and Lili in Strasburg—Emmendingen—Tour of Switzerland: Münstertal, Bernese Oberland, Lauterbrunnen, Tschingel Glacier, Grindelwald, Interlaken, Lake Geneva, Jura Mountains, Chamouni, Montanvert and view of Mont Blanc, over the Furca, ascent of St. Gothard, Zurich—Lavater—*Jery und Bätely*—Schiller at the Hohe Karlsschule—Court visits on return journey—Again in Frankfort—Back to Weimar.

IN the same letter in which Knebel calls Goethe the backbone of things he also speaks of him as tied fast to his work. And this was only too true. He could boast that he had never missed a meeting of the Council except in case of extreme necessity. Futhermore he seldom took a leave of absence from his office. If he went away on a journey it was usually on official business. Only a few journeys were devoted to recreation. In the nine years from his entrance into office to the summer of 1785 we find only three such. Two were to the Harz Mountains and one to Switzerland. The first to the Harz Mountains and the one to Switzerland left too important marks on his development to be passed over hastily.

Both journeys were made in winter. He hoped the garb of winter would enhance the quiet, lonely grandeur of the regions to which he repaired, so that he might the more surely find what he sought in vain in the confused throngs of Court and business life, viz., composure and

elevation of soul as a result of becoming one with the divine spirit permeating himself and nature.

He entered upon the journey to the Harz Mountains at the end of November, 1777. As the Duke rode out to the chase with his cavaliers, Goethe rode to the north over the Ettersberg. In the midst of a hail-storm pure peace of soul came over him, which was transformed into pious exaltation as the continuation of the journey brought him into grander scenery. He went via Sondershausen, Nordhausen, and Ilfeld to Elbingerode, where he devoted a day and a half to the remarkable stalagmites in the Baumannshöhle, in order that he might accurately observe Nature at her never-ending work. He continued the journey to Wernigerode, where he visited a self-torturing, unhappy young theologian, the son of Superintendent Plessing. The young man had previously written him two urgent letters in the hope of obtaining from the author of *Werther* consolation and saving wisdom. Goethe had not answered, preferring to wait till he could personally influence the life-weary youth, who, unsatisfied with his achievements, drank misanthropy out of the fulness of love. His efforts were in vain. Plessing would not respond to any arguments or advice. Goethe departed from him in deep emotion.

Iſt auf deinem Pſalter,
Vater der Liebe, ein Ton
Seinem Ohre vernehmlich,
So erquicke ſein Herz!
Öffne den umwölkten Blick
Über die tauſend Quellen,
Neben dem Durſtenden
In der Wüſte.*

* If upon thy psaltery,
Father of Love, there be tone
That to his ear findeth entrance,
Oh, refresh thou his heart.
Open the beclouded eyes
Unto the thousand fountains
Close by the thirsting one
In the desert.

On his further journey the poet visited Goslar, Rammelsberg, and Claustal, where the various smelting furnaces and mines became a special object of his attention. One of his purposes in taking this journey was to gather information for one of his favourite projects, the reopening of the Ilmenau mines. He was greatly pleased with the happy prosperity which the mining towns derive from treasures stored away in the hills, and with strange sensations contrasted them with his native city, which was mouldering in the midst of its privileges. Intercourse with these humble people was refreshing to him. "How this lonesome journey has taught me to love the class of men that is called the lower, which, however, in the eyes of God is certainly the highest! Here one finds all virtues united: self-restraint, contentment, straightforwardness, fidelity, joy over most humble possessions, innocence, patience—patience—endurance in un—I will not lose myself in exclamations."

No stormy weather, no swampy road, no bad lodgings were able to disturb his lofty frame of mind. Beyond Claustal he turned toward the highest peak of the mountains, the climbing of which had promised him a most beautiful reward, even before he left home. It was the 10th of December. Everything was covered with deep snow. Nowadays when people attempt to ascend Monte Rosa and the Grossglockner in the winter, the climbing of the Brocken in December is considered a mere trifle. In those days fancy peopled a snow-covered mountain with horrible dangers. Day after day Goethe had made inquiries about his undertaking and everybody declared it to be impossible. When he went to the forester who lived in the peat house at the foot of the mountain, he too said it was impossible to make the ascent, especially on account of the fog, in which one could not see three steps in advance. "There I sat," Goethe writes to his beloved, "with heavy heart and half in the notion of returning. I seemed to myself like the king,* whom the prophet bids to

* *Cf.* 2 Kings xiii., 17–19.—C.

smite with his bow, and who smites too few times. I was still and prayed the gods to turn the heart of this man and the weather, and was still. Then he said to me: 'Now you can see the Brocken.' I stepped to the window and it lay before me as distinct as my face in a mirror; then my heart rejoiced and I cried: 'And I should not get to the top! Have you no servant, no one?' And he said: 'I will go with you.' I cut a sign in the window as a witness of my tears of joy, and if it were not to you I should consider it a sin to write it. I could not believe it, till we reached the topmost cliff. All the fog lay below, and up there it was gloriously clear." What he felt up there among the granite cliffs of the summit, the sky with the bright sun above him, a surging sea of fog beneath him, and thus to the outer eye completely separated from all human activities, we find revealed in the hymn-like essay on granite, which, it is true, was not written till later, but is evidently based on the memories, or, more probably, on the sketches of those days. "I do not fear the reproach," says the author of *Werther*, "that it must be a spirit of contradiction that has led me from the observation and description of the human heart, the most recent, most complex, most mobile, most changeable, most perturbable part of creation, to the consideration of the oldest, hardest, deepest, firmest son of nature. For it will readily be granted, that all natural things have an exact relation to one another, that the searching mind does not willingly allow itself to be excluded from anything attainable. Let me, who have suffered and still suffer many things from the variations of human emotions, through their quick changes in myself and in others, enjoy the sublime peace which that lonely, silent presence of great whispering nature bestows, and let him who divines something of it follow me.

"With these sentiments I approach you, ye oldest, worthiest monuments of time. Sitting upon a lofty barren summit and overlooking a wide landscape, I can say to myself: 'Here dost thou rest directly upon a ground that extends down to the deepest places of the earth; no

newer stratum, no heaped-up, washed-together fragments have been deposited between thee and the solid bottom of the primeval world.' . . . In this moment, when the earth's inner powers of attraction and motion are exerted upon me directly, as it were, when the influences of Heaven hover about me more closely, I am attuned to the higher thoughts of nature, and, as the human mind is wont to see a soul and life in everything, there dawns upon my mind a comparison, the sublimity of which I cannot resist. 'So lonely,' I say to myself, as I look down from this utterly barren summit, and even at the foot in the distance can scarcely see a bit of puny moss,—'so lonely,' I say, 'will that man be, who opens his soul to none but the oldest, first, and deepest feelings of truth.' Indeed he can say to himself: 'Here upon the oldest eternal altar, reared directly upon the depths of creation, I offer to the Being of all beings my humble sacrifice.' "

That evening and the next day Goethe was still so full of sacred emotion that he involuntarily spoke of the event in the language of the Bible. We have observed this already in the above-quoted passage of his account of the journey to the summit. Now we may, by way of supplement, hear how he introduces his account: "What shall I say of the Lord with my quill, what manner of song shall I sing of him, at a time when to me all prose becomes poetry and all poetry prose? It is not possible to say with my lips what I have experienced, how shall I accomplish it with this sharp thing? Dear friend, God is dealing with me as with his saints of old, and I know not whence it comes to me. If I pray that, as a sign, the fleece may be dry and the threshing-floor wet, it is so, and *vice versa* also, and above all else the more than motherly guidance to my wishes. The goal of my desire is reached, it hangs by many threads and many threads hung from it, you know how symbolic my life is.—I said [in a former letter]: 'I have a desire to see the full moon.' Now, dearest, when I step outside the door there lies the Brocken before me in the glorious light of the full moon above the firs, and I

was up there to-day, and upon the Teufelsaltar offered up to my God the sacrifice of most heartfelt thanksgiving." *

Three more days he travelled in the mountains, then joined the "brethren," who had meanwhile been on a hunt in Eisenach, and they went home together. The excursion had lasted but little over two weeks, but it had left deep traces behind. He had seemed to himself one beloved of God and guided by him on this journey, on which on one occasion good fortune alone had saved his life. That God loved him and guided him he could only conclude from the mission intrusted to him, and he began to cherish a reverence for the potential divinity in him—the highest and most religious of all reverences, as he later explained in the *Wanderjahre*—and to strive to preserve and unfold it in perfect purity.

"Lonely will that man be, who opens his soul to none but the oldest, first, and deepest feelings of truth."

Goethe returns to Weimar with this determination, and the result is as indicated. He becomes lonely in the midst of the fair, gay circle of men and women about him. His eye turns inward. We hear of no more wild carousing, as in the first two years in Weimar, and even in more moderate pleasures he participates less frequently, and then in a more subdued, at times merely perfunctory manner. He often looks on like Faust amid the insipid mirth of *Auerbachs Keller*. The entries in his diary clearly betray the change in his character. In the first week of February, 1778, he notes: "This week much on the ice, always in the same, almost too pure frame of mind. Beautiful revelations about myself and our business. Peace and premonition of wisdom." On the 12th of February: "Continued, complete estrangement from men." About

* Und Altar des lieblichsten Dankes
Wird ihm des gefürchteten Gipfels
Schneebehangner Scheitel.—*Harzreise.*

[And an altar of dearest thanksgiving
Seemeth to him the awesome summit's
Snow-bemantled crest.]

the same time he sings (*An den Mond*): "Happy is he who shuts himself off from the world without hatred." In December he confesses: "I am not made for this world"; in the following March: "At present I live with the men of this world and eat and drink, even joke with them, but scarcely feel a trace of them, for my inner life goes steadily on its own way."

The development for which the journey to the Harz Mountains prepared the way is completed and made permanent by the Swiss journey. Just as it lasted much longer, so were its effects much more manifold. It stimulated his heart and mind in almost all directions. The mere fact that he returned to his home and to Alsatia after four significant years was for him a great inward experience. Composed, and yet deeply moved, he wrote to his mother, who had often longed for her beloved son, announcing his approaching visit. "The Duke desires to enjoy the beautiful autumn on the Rhine; I would go with him and Chamberlain Wedel. We would lodge with you and stay a few days . . . then go on by water, then return and make our headquarters with you, and from there visit the neighbourhood. Whether taken prosaically or poetically, as a matter of fact this is the dot on the *i* of your past life, for I return for the first time to my fatherland entirely well and happy, and with all possible honour. But inasmuch as I should also like, seeing that the vineyards on the mountains of Samaria have flourished so well, that the fruit thereof be enjoyed, my only desire is that you and father may receive us with open and appreciative hearts and thank God that he lets you see your son again in his thirtieth year in this way. . . . I do not expect the impossible. It has not been God's will that father should enjoy the fruit, now ripe, for which he so ardently yearned. His appetite has been taken away,* and God's will be done. I shall be satisfied with whatever the humour of the moment prompts him to do. But I should like to see you right happy and give you a good

* Goethe's father had become feeble-minded.

day such as I have never given you before. I have everything that man can desire, a life in which I daily exercise myself and daily grow, and this time I return to you in health, no longer a prey to passion and confusion, no longer following blind instinct, but as one beloved of God, who has lived half his life, and whose past suffering gives him immunity from further sorrows and fills his future with abundant hope. If I find you and father happy I shall return with joy to the daily tasks and toils that await me."

On the 18th of September, with the Duke and Wedel, he arrived in Frankfort. Every other description of the entrance of the guests into Goethe's father's house must keep silent before the words in which his mother's rejoicing heart reported it. "The 18th of September," she writes to Duchess Amalia, "was the great day when old father Goethe and Frau Aja envied the blissful gods neither their dwelling in high Olympus, nor their ambrosia and nectar, neither their vocal nor their instrumental music, but were so happy, so completely happy, that it is doubtful if ever mortal man has tasted greater or purer joys than we two happy parents did on this day of jubilation and joy. . . . His Highness, our most gracious and most excellent Duke, in order completely to surprise us, dismounted at a distance from our house, and so came noiselessly to the door, rang, entered the blue room, etc. Imagine now, Your Highness, how Frau Aja is sitting at the round table, how the door of the room opens, how in the same moment her darling boy falls upon her neck, how the Duke at some distance beholds for a moment the mother's joy, how finally Frau Aja hastens to the Prince as if intoxicated, half weeping, half laughing, not knowing at all what to do, and how the handsome Chamberlain von Wedel also takes a deep interest in the wonderful joy. Finally the scene with the father—that cannot possibly be described. I was afraid he would die on the spot; even to-day, after His Highness has been gone from us a considerable time, he has not yet fully recovered, and Frau Aja is not a whit

better. Your Highness can easily fancy how pleased and happy we have been during these five days. Merck came also, and conducted himself pretty well; he never can leave the Mephistopheles entirely at home, it is true, but we are used to that. . . . Now all that befell the handsome Chamberlain von Wedel and Privy Councillor Goethe, the way in which our most noble *Fräulein Gänscher* * put on airs and set their caps for them, but failed, and so on, this certainly ought to be arranged in a pretty drama. . . . Then further, when Frau Aja could no longer contain herself, but had to steal away into a corner and give vent to her feelings, I am quite sure our most excellent Princess would have rejoiced at our joy, for it was not dissembled; it was true feeling of the heart. This is a little sketch of those days, which, in the words of the late Werther, were such as God stores up for his saints, and now one can again take up one's burden and plod along through this every-day world." A few days later she adds, by way of supplement: "I found my darling boy very greatly changed for the better. He looks healthier and has become manlier in every way. But his moral character has not changed in the least, much to the joy of his old acquaintances; everybody found him the same old friend. I was rejoiced in my soul to see how quickly every one became fond of him again—the rejoicing among the young women, among my relatives and acquaintances, the joy of my aged mother."

Through the Palatinate the travellers journey to Alsatia. Goethe yearns to see his forsaken Friederike again. He leaves his companions for a day and rides out to Sesenheim. "There I found the family as I had left them eight years before, and was given a very kind and friendly reception. As I am now as pure and calm as the air, the presence of good, quiet people is very agreeable to me. The second daughter of the house formerly loved me, more dearly than I deserved, and more than others on whom I have bestowed much passion and fidelity; I was forced to leave

* In the Frankfort dialect *Gänscher* is the plural of *Gans*, "goose."—C.

her in a moment when it well-nigh cost her life. She passed lightly over that fact, told me what traces still remained of that illness, conducted herself in a most lovely manner and with such cordiality from the very first moment when I unexpectedly appeared on the threshold and we ran into each other, that I felt quite relieved. To her credit I must say that she did not make the slightest attempt to awaken any former feelings within my breast.

"She led me into every arbour, and there I had to sit down, and it was well so. We had the most beautiful full moon; I inquired about everything. A neighbour who had formerly helped us in our labours was called in, and he said he had asked about me only a week ago; the barber had to come in too; I found old songs that I had composed and a coach I had painted; we recalled many pranks of those happy days, and I found that they all remembered me as well as if I had hardly been gone six months. The old people were very cordial; they thought I had grown younger. I stayed over night and departed the next morning at sunrise, leaving behind me friendly faces, so that I can now think once more of this little corner of the world with satisfaction and live in peace with the spirits of these reconciled friends."

He rode on to Strasburg and there, too, sought out a former sweetheart, Lili. She had meanwhile, after many tribulations, been married to the banker, Bernhard von Türckheim, a finely educated man of strong character, and Goethe found her playing with her little seven-weeks-old daughter. She seemed to him perfectly happy and he gladly convinced himself that she had everything she needed. He was given a most friendly reception and departed with the same feeling of satisfaction as from Sesenheim.

What great changes had taken place in Goethe within a few years may be learned from a comparison of the letters quoted, their noble, harmonious flow and profound repose, with the restless, vacillating letters of 1775 and 1776, and their sudden transitions from the most sublime to the

commonest style. Not merely three or four years,—a whole lifetime seems to lie between them.

On the 26th of May, 1775, Goethe had written to Johanna Fahlmer: "The devil take me, Aunt! it is Friday the 26th and I am still in Strasburg. But to-morrow I go to Emmendingen. The world seems mad and queer wherever I go." On this occasion also he went from Strasburg to Emmendingen, where he found his "Aunt" the wife of his brother-in-law, Schlosser. Cornelia had died on the 8th of June, 1777. Mournfully he writes: "Here I am now at the grave of my sister; her household is to me as a tablet, once graced by a beloved figure now effaced." From Emmendingen the journey is continued to Basel, and on along the course of the Birs through narrow winding gorges in the Jura Mountains. Just before reaching Münster (Moutier), they pass through the most impressive part of the valley, the Münstertal (Val Moutier), which inspires Goethe with the wish that it might have been his lot to dwell in the midst of grand scenery. "Every morning I would drink in from it greatness, as I do patience and tranquillity from my lovely valley." At the end of the gorge he turns back alone to study more closely its geological formation. He rejoices to see verified his theory of the gradual growth of the earth's crust without any revolutionary catastrophe. "One feels deeply that here there is no caprice, all is the product of slow-working, eternal law." From Münster the travellers proceed via Biel to the canton of Bern, where they feel something of the blessings possible under a republican constitution. In the landscape "everything is happily laid out and adorned, and looks cheerful, productive, and rich. The city is the most beautiful we have seen; it is built on a plan of civic equality. The uniformity and cleanliness are a great comfort, especially as one feels that there is no empty ornamentation or dead level of despotism. From Bern they go to Thun for a several-days' excursion into the Oberland. On the 9th of October, in the afternoon, the company arrives at Lauterbrunnen, where they admire

the famous Staubbach waterfall. Nowadays this fall is not so much admired, because its volume of water is too small. But at that time the peculiar phenomenon had a magic effect on the observer. Goethe becomes absorbed in it, sees water sprites ascending and descending in the veil of mist, and hears them singing of the soul and water in wonderful strophes which become to him a symbol of his own life.*

From Lauterbrunnen the company took a side trip to the magnificent region of the head of the valley, climbed the Ober-Steinberg and a part of the Tschingel Glacier. On the 11th of October their journey was continued to Grindelwald, not, as is usual nowadays, over the Wengern-alp, which was considered a very difficult route, but through the valley via Zweilütschinen. After they had seen the two glaciers in Grindelwald they crossed over the Grosse Scheideck to Meiringen. There Goethe made a vain search for a relative of Peter Imbaumgarten, a young Swiss whom he had taken to his home in Weimar by reason of a legacy from Baron von Lindau. Proceeding via Brienz and the Brienzer See they arrived on the 14th at Interlaken, or, more correctly, Unterseen, at that time only a plain, quiet village, whence they returned to Bern.

The whole tour had been to Goethe a source of highest rapture. He declares himself incapable of giving an adequate conception of the glorious bit of the Alps that he has seen. Not even thought or memory can compare with the beauty and grandeur of the scenes and their loveliness in such lights, at such times of day, and from such points of view. . . . Later, when he published the description of his Alpine tour of 1779, he did not feel able worthily to supplement this part of it from memory and preferred to leave a gap. He was sorry to be obliged to content himself with lightly skimming the cream of the Oberland. "If I had been alone, I should have gone higher and deeper, but with the Duke I had to keep within moderation." After a few days' rest in Bern the travellers

* Cf. *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern.*—C.

set off for Lake Geneva and reached its shore at Lausanne. They first felt its full charm in Vevay, where nature and Rousseau's poetry were united in most beautiful harmony. Goethe could not refrain from tears when he saw before him all the places which Rousseau through his *Nouvelle Héloise* had peopled with sensuous beings. From Vevay the company rode westward in the direction of Geneva as far as Rolle. From there they took a side trip into the southern part of the Jura in order to visit the Vallée de Joux, washed out in the summit of the mountain range. This brought them back again into Bernese territory and Goethe once more enjoyed the prosperity, activity, and cleanliness of the inhabitants, but, above all, the fine highways, which he, the Weimar commissioner of highways, had not expected in this remote mountain region. As they ascended the summit valley in order to reach the Dôle they entered French territory. Here was a great transition. "The first thing we noticed was the bad roads. The soil is very stony . . . the surrounding forests are ruined, one can readily see in the appearance of houses and inhabitants, I will not say, their want, but at least their very straitened circumstances; they belong almost as serfs to the canons of St. Claude, they are bound to the soil, and are taxed heavily, *sujets à la main morte et au droit de la suite*." The summit of the Dôle was reached at noon; the weather was splendid. Goethe here enjoyed a panorama of the Alps such as he had not seen before. On the top of the Rigi, four years before, the weather was foggy, and since then he had not ascended any peak which afforded a comprehensive view of the Alps and their foothills. What here impressed itself upon his eyes and soul he has depicted for us with incomparable beauty. After having described the green hills between Vevay, Geneva, and Solothurn, with their thousand blinking villages, he continues: "And ever again were our eyes and souls drawn to the series of gleaming ice-covered mountains. The sun inclined more toward the west and illuminated their larger surfaces before us. What black rocky ridges and crags,

towers and walls rise up from the lake in serried files before them, forming stupendous, wild, impenetrable outer courts, when once we see their manifold forms lying clear and distinct in full view before us! It makes one feel like giving up every pretension to comprehend the infinite when one's perceptions and reasonings do not suffice for the finite. Before us we saw a fruitful inhabited country; even the soil upon which we stood, a lofty, barren mountain, produces grass and forage for animals useful to man, and the arrogant master of the world may yet appropriate it to his service; but those peaks are like a row of sacred virgins whom the Spirit of Heaven guards for himself alone in eternal purity in the impenetrable regions before our eyes. . . . Even when nearer to the valley our eyes dwelt only upon the icy peaks in front of us. Those farthest to the left in the Oberland seemed to melt in a light fiery vapour, those nearest still stood out clear with their red sides; little by little those farthest away became a whitish, greenish gray. It almost looked alarming. As a mighty body dying from without toward the heart they all slowly paled away toward Mont Blanc, whose broad bosom still gleamed red, and even after that faded away seemed to retain a reddish hue, just as when one is unwilling to recognise at once the death of a loved one and mark the moment when the pulse ceases to beat."

Unfortunately, one might almost say, the symbolical truth of this wonderfully toned picture has suffered in one point. The sublime conception of the high peaks as unapproachable heavenly virgins has been lost to the daring generation of the present.

On the 27th of October the travellers went to Geneva where Goethe was much admired as the author of *Werther*. He and the Duke had a burning desire to go to Chamouni, to the foot of Mont Blanc and descend thence by a pass into the valley of the Rhone. The good Genevese still lived in dread of high mountains. In beautiful summer weather some of them had occasionally, it is true, ventured into that wilderness and brought back tales of horror, but

they could not understand how any one should care to go there in November. They appealed to the Duke with most earnest protestations and made of the undertaking a matter of conscience and of state. Goethe had already learned by experience in the Harz Mountains what foundation there was for such anxieties. In order to satisfy himself and the objectors he proposed that they consult the well-known physicist, de Saussure, who was quite familiar with the Mont Blanc region and had once himself attempted to ascend the mountain. "For such are the people, methinks, that one must ask, if one will get along in the world." Saussure declared they could make the trip without the slightest danger; they need only pay heed to the weather and the advice of the countrymen.

Highly pleased, the Duke and Goethe set off on the 3rd of November through the valley of the Arve toward Mont Blanc, Wedel, who was subject to dizziness, remaining behind. On the following day it had already grown dark when the wanderers approached Chamouni. "The stars came out one after another, and above the summits of the mountains before us to the right we saw a light which we could not explain; clear, without lustre, like the Milky Way, but denser, almost like the Pleiades, only larger, it held our attention a long time until, finally, as we changed our point of view, like a pyramid pervaded by a mysterious inner light, best compared perhaps with the light of a glow-worm, it towered above the tops of all the mountains and made us sure it was the summit of Mont Blanc." The inhabitants of Chamouni were not a little surprised to see strangers arriving so late in the year. On the morrow the tourists climbed Montanvert in order to get a full view of the Mer de Glace, took a few hundred steps upon its wavy crystal cliffs, and then descended. As longer excursions were out of the question they left the mighty mass of Mont Blanc after a stay of only one day. With the aid of a guide they sought to cross over the Col de Balme to Martigny. Battling clouds enhanced the wild charm of the scenery. At the top of the pass the wind whistled sharply, it snowed

somewhat, and the descent was wearisome, but in the evening they rested comfortably in the warm, flat valley of the Rhone. This was the tour which the delicate Genevese had described as a journey to Hell.

A more ambitious and critical part of the journey was to follow, up the valley of the Rhone, and over the Furca to St. Gothard. Even Saussure had left the question open, whether or not they could cross the Furca so late in the year. But, undismayed, the Duke and his minister marched on up the long valley, accompanied only by a servant. Long before they reached the Furca they came to snow, and Goethe began to be tortured by evil forebodings. On the 12th of November, at nine in the morning, they arrived at Oberwald, the highest inhabited place in the valley, one hour from the Furca. With great excitement they here made their final inquiries. The Furca was no Brocken, the way lay for seven hours through uninhabited regions, and they dared not take too great a risk with a sovereign. It was a comfort for them to hear from the inhabitants that there were people in the village who often went over in the winter. The Duke and Goethe sent for two such men, who, when they had examined the travellers, signified their willingness to make the trip with them. Behind the village the broad masses of ice of the Rhone Glacier soon appeared and heightened the awe-inspiring character of the landscape. From the foot of the glacier the ascent began to be very steep. The snow grew deeper and the advance more tiresome. Light clouds passed over the pale sun and for a time sifted down large flakes of snow upon the immense monotonous mountain desert. The depths from which the wanderers had come lay grey and endless in the clouds behind them. Here even Goethe unmistakably experienced a slight tremor; to a certain extent he was the son of his time, when he said that if a man on this journey should allow his imagination to gain the mastery over him he would be sure to die of anxiety and fear, even if there were no danger apparent. After a strenuous walk of three and a half hours they reached the

top of the pass. The cloudy sky deprived them of the glorious view of the giant peaks about Zermatt.

The descent was worse than the ascent. The first guide often sank to his hips in the snow, but as he and his comrade proved to be capable and trustworthy, and the storm held off, the travellers continued their way in good spirits. After three and a half hours of further walking they found safe shelter with the Capuchin fathers in Realp. "It is overcome; the knot that tied up our tour is cut in two," wrote Goethe triumphantly in the evening to Frau von Stein. Twelve years later Wilhelm von Humboldt turned back at the sight of the snow on the Furca in October.

On the next day they followed the Urseren valley, of which Goethe again became very fond, as far as Hospental, and then ascended to the summit of the St. Gothard Pass. For what would a Swiss journey have been without climbing St. Gothard? The sky was perfectly clear and a deep blue; the landscape glistened with wonderful lights, but it was so piercingly cold on the summit that the wanderers scarcely ventured away from the stove. With peculiar sensations Goethe recalled his former visit here when his cares, sentiments, plans, and hopes had been quite different, and he, not suspecting what the future had in store for him, had turned his back on Italy. Even now the "promised land" possessed no charm for him. He turned northward with the Duke, and in a few days they came via Lucerne to Zurich, where they found Lavater so cordial that Goethe declared the meeting with him to have been the seal and climax of the journey. During the fortnight that they tarried in the beautiful city on the Limmat they made a careful study of the art collections, as had been their custom throughout the journey. Furthermore, Goethe began a little opera, *Jery und Bätely*, the Swiss scenery of which was permanently to waft to him the fresh air of the Alps. The travellers left Switzerland via Schaffhausen and went to Stuttgart, where they spent several days at the Court. Among the many festivities to which they were invited by the Duke of Württemberg was the celebration of Founder's

Day at the Military Academy, later known as the "Hohe Karlsschule," at which the pupil Friedrich Schiller received three prizes. On the Rhine they visited the courts with which the Duke was related,—Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Homburg, and Hanau, where they were thoroughly chilled and bored. After an extended visit with Frau Aja they returned to Weimar on the 13th of January, 1780.

Goethe and Karl August came home exalted and happy, Goethe so full of enthusiasm that he wished to see the memory of the journey preserved in a monument of stone. His desire was not realised. The journey remained, nevertheless, a permanent monument in the lives of both.

# XXV

## INNER STRUGGLES

Effect of Swiss journey on Goethe—Greater devotion to official duties—His friend Merck and his mother object to his continuing in office—He remains firm—Leaves his Gartenhaus and moves into Weimar—Increased isolation and silence—Premonitions of early death—Mineralogical studies—*Fragmente über den Granit*—Discovery of the intermaxillary—Discovery of the metamorphosis of plants—Inner longing for further scientific and literary production—Hindrances—Consciousness of his real calling—On the wheel of Ixion—Intercourse with Frau von Stein disturbed—Health undermined—Second Werther crisis—Yearning for Italy—Determination to seek refuge in flight—Steals away from Karlsbad.

GREAT as the charm of the picturesque Swiss journey must have been for such a susceptible eye as Goethe's, much as his scientific, economic, and artistic observations may have absorbed his attention, the chief value and chief effect of the journey were of a moral nature. Through the visits with his parents and the friends and loved ones of his youth, the first part of the journey assumed the aspect of a great confession which absolved him from the tortures and oppressions still haunting him from earlier years. The genuine cordiality with which he was everywhere greeted produced in him a truly ethereal satisfaction which found utterance in a rosary of purest, most faithful friendship. In Switzerland the sublimity of nature gave his soul new wings. Filled with the greatness of nature, he felt his soul enlarge. While he tarried in the angelic tranquillity and peaceful atmosphere of Lavater's circle his whole moral nature was so stirred that he hoped to put aside many evils.

In this way the four months' contemplation of the world and of himself was for him a constant process of elevation and purification. His spirit, which since the Harz journey had been swayed by a mighty, idealistic impulse, now reached such an exaltation, such clearness and seriousness, that his youthful life—the years before 1778—seemed to him petty, confused, and lacking in purity. He now called the author of *Götz* an untamed, ill-bred boy, and his disgust at the wild Storm-and-Stress doings of his first years in Weimar became so intense that he even hated to see again the places that had witnessed his unrestrained pranks.

With the moral seriousness that had come over him, and the consciousness of the kindness which he had experienced from all men, he appreciated more than ever his high and sacred duty to devote his life to the welfare of the people of the little country in which fate had allotted him such a broad influence. As he, with his thirty years, seemed to himself rather old, and since he did not know how much longer his thread of life would be spun out, he determined to use his days with redoubled energy.

"The daily tasks that are imposed upon me and daily become easier and harder demand my presence whether I wake or dream. This duty becomes daily dearer to me, and I should like to equal the greatest men in the performance of it, and in nothing higher. This desire to rear to as great a height as possible the pyramid of my existence upon the firmly established foundations which have been given me outweighs all others, and scarcely permits me to forget it for one moment. I dare not delay; I am already well along in life, and fate may take me off in the midst of my years, and the Tower of Babylon remain unfinished. It shall at least be said that the plan was bold, and if I live, God willing, my strength shall suffice" (to Lavater, September, 1780).

This strict devotion to service is, for a poet, for an artistic nature, a heroic determination. He allows nothing to swerve him from the path he has laid out: neither the seductive calls of poesy, nor the temporary longings of his

heart, nor the admonitions of others. He considers all these voices to be those of evil spirits that would hinder him in the accomplishment of good. Poesy he seeks almost violently to suppress. "From these fountains and cascades I withdraw as much of the water as possible and conduct it into millraces and irrigation channels, but before I am aware, an evil spirit turns the spigot and everything spurts and gushes" (to Frau von Stein, September 14, 1780). "An evil spirit abuses my separation from you, holds up to me the most burdensome phase of my condition and advises me to save myself by flight" (July 8, 1781). Merck, who had been last with him in October, 1780, in Mühlhausen and had attempted to liberate him from the galley of office, he calls a dragon. Merck was so sure that Goethe's highflown political plans would go to pieces on the resistance of the dull world, and that the petty details that were left would not compensate him for the tremendous sacrifice that he was making of his person and his calling as poet, that he did not rest until he had enlisted Goethe's mother in an effort to tear him away from the accursed office. "At all events," he said to her, "you should seek to get him back here; that infamous climate over there is certainly not good for him. He has finished the chief task. The Duke is now as he should be, some one else can do the dirty work that remains to be done; he is too good for that."

The mother reports this to her son and adds: "Thou must know best what is good for thee. As my situation is such now that I am my own lord and master and hence could unhindered see to it that thy days were good and quiet, thou canst easily imagine how much it would pain me if thou shouldst impair thy health and strength in thy service." But Goethe remains firm even toward his mother. He sums up excellently his former and present life, and from these premises concludes the necessity and wholesomeness of remaining in his present position. "I beg you not to worry about me and not to be led astray by anything. My health is far better than I could expect or

hope for in former days, and as it is good enough for me to do at least the greater part of what is incumbent upon me, I certainly have reason to be satisfied with it. As for my situation, it has, in spite of its great burdens, very many desirable features, the best proof of which is that I cannot think of another possible position to which I should like to be transferred at present. To long with hypochondriac uneasiness to get out of one's skin and into another seems to me not very proper. Merck and several others judge my position quite falsely. They see only what I sacrifice and not what I gain; they cannot understand that I am daily growing richer by daily giving so much. You remember the last days that I spent with you before coming here. If I had continued under such conditions, I should surely have come to a bad end. The disproportion of the narrow, inert burgher circle to the breadth and vivacity of my nature would have driven me mad. In spite of my lively imagination and my spiritual intuition of things human, I should have remained for ever unacquainted with the world and in a perpetual childhood, which usually becomes intolerable to itself and others because of its vanity and all related faults. How much more fortunate it was for me to be placed in a position of which I was in no sense master, where through mistakes of ignorance and over-hastiness I had opportunities enough to learn to know myself and others, where, left to myself and my fate, I passed through so many trials, which may not be necessary for many hundreds of men, but which I greatly needed for my development! Even now, how could I with my nature desire a happier condition than one which has infinite possibilities for me? For even if new capabilities should daily develop within me, my conceptions become clearer and clearer, my strength increase, my knowledge broaden, my judgment correct itself, and my pluck grow, still I should daily find occasion to apply all these faculties, both in great things and in small. You see how far I am from the hypochondriac discomfort which makes so many discontented with their lot, and

that only most important considerations or very strange, unexpected developments could move me to forsake my post; furthermore, at a time when the trees already planted are beginning to grow, and one may hope after the harvest to separate the tares from the wheat, it would be an injustice to myself if I, because of any discomfort, should run away and rob myself of shade, fruit, and harvest" (August 11, 1781).

We observe that Goethe avoids the pivotal point of Merck's criticism, the disproportion between his mind and his official duties. The crowning argument, that the Duke's education is finished, he refutes with the stronger argument of his own education.

So he perseveres in his career, and with such enthusiasm, that, four days later, rejoicing over his success in the War Commission, he expresses the desire for a much more important department. This wish is fulfilled, as we know, the following summer by his appointment to the presidency of the Chamber of Finance. In order to lose less time in going to and fro, and to devote himself more to his offices, he leaves his beloved Gartenhaus on the 1st of June and moves into the city, into the house on the Frauenplan, where, except for a short interval, he resides for the remainder of his days. This was for him, the friend of nature, a great sacrifice, however much he sought to make light of it. But greater sacrifices were yet to come. His calling began to wear upon him and the fire of his ideals no longer maintained his strength. The delusion that these heavenly jewels could be set in the crowns of earthly princes had gradually forsaken him. Nevertheless he continues to resist all inclinations to relieve himself of his official burden or even to lighten it. Even though he no longer sees in such inclinations the temptations of an evil spirit, still he considers them the outgrowth of unmanly weakness. Fate has laid upon him a definite duty: this duty must be fulfilled, and in its performance he must seek his happiness. These are the axioms upon which he bases his action. "I look neither to the right nor to the left, and my old motto is always copied above a new office:

'*Hic est aut nusquam, quod quærimus.*'"* These are his words to Knebel on the 27th of July, 1782. Two days later he writes to Lavater: "Of myself I have nothing to say to thee except that I am sacrificing myself to my calling, in which I seek nothing as if it were the goal of my ideas." How resigned this sounds when compared with his language to Lavater two years before!

After the assumption of the presidency of the Chamber, Goethe is so burdened with work that he gives up almost all social intercourse except with Frau von Stein. Inward loneliness, apparent since 1778, is followed by outward isolation. Yet this is not unwelcome to him, and he maintains his aloofness even when away from Weimar—when he attends the Diet in Eisenach, for example, where little business is interspersed with much amusement. With his loneliness increases also his silence, a phenomenon wholly foreign to his nature. Everybody complains of it; even the Duke and little Fritz von Stein, whom he took into his house in 1783. The news of his solitary, quiet life reaches Frankfort and again disturbs his mother. He seeks to pacify her in a letter of the 7th of December, 1783, the anniversary of the dangerous crisis of 1768, and reminds her of how she would have rejoiced at that time if any one had prophesied to her his present condition. "That a man is made serious by serious matters is natural, especially if one is by nature meditative and desires to promote the good and the right in the world." He again emphasises the fact that he is well in every respect, and continues: "Take pleasure, I pray you, in my present life, even if I should leave this world before you. My career has not been a disgrace to you, I leave behind good friends and a good name, and hence it can be your greatest consolation that I do not altogether die." These strange, melancholy words from the pen of a man of thirty-four were a stronger refutation of his arguments than all his mother's amplifications.

* Changed in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (vii., 1) to, "Here or nowhere is America."

In the summer of 1784 the term for which Goethe agreed to undertake the presidency of the Chamber expired. He had accomplished his immediate purposes in the establishment of order and economy. The question must again have crept into his mind, whether it was not time, seeing that his ultimate aims vanished more and more into the clouds, for him to devote his years and strength to the other high tasks of his life.

He did not even need to think of his poetic projects. His scientific investigations had meanwhile become so extensive and had resulted in such fruitful ideas that he must have had a most ardent desire to cultivate this intellectual field on a larger sale.

It was from his official activity that he had received the incentive to resume his old hobbies in natural science and transform them into serious research. Road-making and mining led him to mineralogy and geology, forestry and agriculture to botany, while lectures on the human figure at the Weimar School of Drawing occasioned his more careful anatomical studies. His first progress was in the mineral kingdom, especially after the sojourn in Switzerland, where for weeks he had every day had rich material for observation. "I have given myself over to this mineralogical knowledge," he writes to Merck in October, 1780, "with a perfect passion, because my office justifies me in doing so." He makes extensive collections, urges geological surveys of Thuringia, the Harz, and the Rhön, and himself lends diligent assistance, studying the older geological literature, and seeking to form clear ideas about the constitution and formation of the crust of the earth in general, and particularly in the Thuringian Forest and adjoining regions. In this way he discovers truths far in advance of his time. He undertakes to embody them in a treatise on orology, of which the chapter devoted to the history of the crust's formation was, so far as we are able to see, intended to show that not revolutions interrupting regular development, but forces working slowly through endless years down to the present, have brought forth the

mountains, and that those geological strata not containing petrified organic beings are older than all others, while the age of those containing fossils must be determined according to the natural sequence of the organisms. Unfortunately nothing has been preserved of this geology except two small preparatory studies, *Fragmente über den Granit.*

Of greater significance were his researches in the organic field. As in the inorganic field, here also he was guided by the idea of gradual transformation or development. He would admit of a gap nowhere in nature. Both in the whole series of organisms and within the individual organisms he searched for original forms, by which the multiplicity of phenomena could be explained by a process of evolution. His idea was verified first in the case of man. In his anatomical studies, which he had been carrying on in Jena under the direction of Loder since the autumn of 1781, he had been disturbed by the theory that the little bone found between the two halves of the upper jaw in animals was wanting in man, and that in this want consisted the real difference between the skeleton of man and that of the ape. This theory was so contrary to his conception of nature that he concentrated his whole attention upon it, till finally, in February, 1784, after examining a large number of animal and human skulls he demonstrated to a certainty that the theory was based on an error, since the intermaxillary was present in man, and was hard to discover only because grown together with the adjacent bones. Realising the significance of his discovery, he experienced "a joy that moved his whole being to its depths." No less was his joy when, in 1786, at the close of a long chain of observations, there dawned upon him the great idea of the metamorphosis of plants, that is to say, the discovery that all organs of plants are merely specialised leaves. "If I could only communicate to some one the vision and the joy! but it is impossible. It is not a dream, not a fantasy; it is a discovery of the essential form with which nature, as it were, ever plays,

and in her play produces the most manifold life. If I had time in my short life I believe I could extend it to all the realms of nature, to her entire realm."

Equally pure and intense joy is felt in the few spare hours in which the muse grants him poetic achievement.

Such moments of artistic and scientific happiness give him further a clear idea of his true natural calling. "This morning I finished the chapter in *Wilhelm*. It gave me a happy hour. Really I was born to be a writer." "How much better off I should be if I were away from the strife of political elements and could turn my mind to the arts and sciences, for which I was born!" "I had difficulty in tearing myself away from Aristotle and passing to questions of lease and pasturage." "I am just suited to private life and cannot understand why fate has been pleased to place me in an administrative office and a princely family." These are utterances from the year 1782. Nevertheless he still hardens his heart against these clear calls from within.

It is only after he has fully discharged his duty as president of the Chamber that his exaggerated feeling of official obligation disappears, and he begins to think of himself. "I can and will no longer bury my talent." But the moment this thought comes to him, a desire which he once before entertained must again arise within him,—the desire that through a long absence from Weimar he may find the way back to himself and be partly or wholly relieved of the duties of office. But he is still bound by strong cords.

Gewiß, ich wäre ſchon ſo ferne, ferne,
Soweit die Welt nur offen liegt, gegangen,
Bezwängen mich nicht übermächt'ge Sterne,
Die mein Geſchick an deines angehangen.
Daß ich in dir nun erſt mich kennen lerne,
Mein Dichten, Trachten, Hoffen und Verlangen
Allein nach dir und deinem Weſen drängt,
Mein Leben nur an deinem Leben hängt! *

* I should have journeyed far ere this—indeed,
As far as e'er the wide world open lies,

These verses to Frau von Stein were composed in August, 1784. However, it was not merely love for her, as he here says, but also love for the Duke and the country, that would not let him go. The Duke had become more deeply involved than seemed advisable to Goethe in the politics of the federation of princes, which was already Prussian in sympathy. The same autumn he had undertaken in its behalf a journey of several months to the Rhenish courts. It could not be foreseen whether or not Karl August, if left to himself, might not in his fiery zeal and with his military inclinations, drag the country into a politically and financially dangerous situation. Hence Goethe could not leave his post till he had the assurance of certainty concerning the issue. Things dragged along. The year 1784 and the year 1785 came to an end, and still there was no definite decision. Under such conditions the continuation of his official activity must have become more and more burdensome to him. "Given from the wheel of Ixion," he writes on the 20th of February, 1785. "I am patching at the beggar's mantle which is about to fall from my shoulders," he writes to Knebel on the 5th of May. Fortunately his love for Frau von Stein is still a "life-preserver that holds his head above water." When he works or chats with her a few hours in the evening the iron fetters about his soul are loosened. Finally, in August, 1785, even this alleviating remedy is withheld from him, when Herr von Stein, excluded from the Court table, begins to live at home.

In whatever direction Goethe now looked, everything was calculated to make him most profoundly dissatisfied.

His literary works resembled a great field of ruins. *Faust*, *Egmont*, *Elpenor*, *Tasso*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Die Geheimnisse* lay about him in fragments; not to mention

> Had the o'erruling stars but so decreed,
> That bound my fate to thine in wondrous wise.
> That I in thee myself at last may read,
> My fancies, longings, hopes, desires, and sighs
> Do all to thee and to thy presence throng;
> Nought but thy life can life in me prolong.

other older or more recent conceptions, such as *Prometheus*, *Cäsar*, *Der ewige Jude*, *Der Falke*, and the novel, *Über das Weltall*. Even *Iphigenie*, the only great composition which he had completed in the years 1776–1786, seemed to him so imperfect that he was determined to reject its present form. Not only did his poetical creations present such a disconsolate appearance,—he himself did not even know whether or not his creative power had suffered irreparable injury from the long neglect.

His scientific work, apart from the short paper on the intermaxillary, had not advanced beyond the embryonic stage. His head surged with great ideas concerning all the realms of nature, but where should he gain the time to demonstrate them to be scientific facts, and present his discoveries in writing?

His relation to Frau von Stein, formerly a source of comfort, had now become a source of pain. The very circumstance that Herr von Stein had been restored to his home had opened Goethe's eyes to the unnatural basis of his own position. In whatever light and from whatever standpoint he considered the matter, the thought that he did not possess the woman he loved fretted him and consumed him.

His health was dangerously undermined by too great a burden of business. We have a picture of him from the year 1785, when he for the first time visited a watering-place for the sake of his health, and it shows a wrinkled and care-worn face. Wieland had already complained to Merck that it was only too plain that Goethe was suffering in body and soul under the oppressive burden which he had assumed "for our best interests." Schiller learned in 1787 that broken health had necessitated Goethe's journey to Italy. Even the climate, never very salubrious for him, now became quite intolerable. "Under this brazen sky!" he complains, gnashing his teeth.

From his office he learns the final word of wisdom: "Whoever devotes himself to governmental administration, without being the sovereign, must be either a Philistine, or a rascal, or a fool."

Under the pressure of this completely unsatisfactory, painful, harrowing situation he experiences a second and more violent Werther crisis. "I find that the author [of *Werther*] did wrong not to shoot himself after having finished the novel," is his bitter remark in June, 1786; and in May of the following year, after having been away from Weimar for many months, he says, "I should have preferred death to a life such as I lived during those few years."

The thought of rescue by flight becomes a firm determination. No consultations about the how, whither, how long—a sudden disappearance seemed to him the only sure way of escape. Whither he should go, there could be no doubt, for with the aggravation of his condition in Weimar his longing for Italy had become intensified beyond measure. "For several years I have not dared look at a Latin author, or touch anything that brought up a picture of Italy, without suffering the most terrible pain." "The goal of my most cherished longing, which filled my whole soul with anguish, was Italy." This longing is echoed in the pathetic words of Mignon. He, too, dared not delay much longer. Whether Europe would enjoy a few more years of peace seemed to him very questionable. The famous diamond necklace intrigue,* which became known in the autumn of 1785, had made a terrible impression upon him. In the base immorality which it revealed in city, court, and state, he foresaw immediately what horrible developments were in store for the future. His eyes were so riveted upon uncanny visions that for several days it seemed to his friends, who did not know what was going on within him, that he was crazy.

Under such circumstances it was a happy turn of fortune that in the summer of 1786 the way was finally prepared for flight. The Duke had finally joined the federation, with the necessary reservations. This determined the course of his foreign policy. Furthermore, the strained relations within the German Empire were relieved by the

* For an account of the *Affaire du collier*, see Carlyle, *The Diamond Necklace*.—C.

withdrawal of the Austrian claims. So far as internal administration was concerned, Goethe had everything so carefully arranged that for the present he could safely trust his business to other hands. "Indeed, I might die, it would not create any disturbance."

Consequently he could venture upon his hegira with a good conscience. He proceeded first to Karlsbad, where he met the Duke, Herder, and Frau von Stein, and felt his spirit refreshed and uplifted in their society. The first to leave the circle was Frau von Stein; Goethe accompanied her as far as Schneeberg in the Erzgebirge, and then returned to Karlsbad. On the 27th of August Karl August left the watering-place; on the 28th Goethe's birthday was celebrated among his friends with merry festivities. In the midst of social distractions he had worked at the new edition of his writings. On the 2nd of September he wrote to the Duke, Herder, and Frau von Stein, telling them of his plan to enter upon a journey immediately, but saying nothing of whither he was going or how long he expected to be gone. His last words, at eleven o'clock in the evening, were to Frau von Stein: "At last, at last I am ready, and yet not ready. For in reality I have another week's work here, but I desire to get away, and so I bid thee once more adieu. Farewell, sweetheart, I am thine." At three o'clock in the morning he "steals away" from Karlsbad in the diligence, and rolls away toward the south.

The fugitive left behind him in Weimar most glorious memories. Such pure devotion of strength and will could not fail of profound recognition, even if the results were not commensurate with his purposes and efforts. When Schiller was in Weimar the following summer he heard Goethe's name "mentioned by a very great number of people with something akin to adoration."

# XXVI

## ITALY

Goethe unspeakably happy to be free—Mad haste to reach Italy, for fear he may be called back—Route taken—Feelings on entering Italy —Chief interest in works of antiquity—Completely Italianised in Verona—Vicenza—Enraptured with Palladio—Desire to share in the lives of men—Padua—Venice—The sea—Outburst of hostility toward the Gothic—Palladio again—Goethe cares for no art but the antique and its best reflections in the Renaissance—Feverish longing to be in Rome—Three days in Bologna—Three hours in Florence—Rome at last—First impressions—New life—Study of the antique—Michael Angelo—Raphael—Elements of the antique that please Goethe—His incognito—Tischbein and other friends—Frau von Stein's feelings concerning Goethe's flight—Goethe's diary, written for her, but not sent for months—Her scathing reproof—Painful situation—Peace restored—Absorbed in study of antique art—Journey to Naples—Enjoyment of life and nature—Ascents of Vesuvius during eruptions—Pæstum—Tour of Sicily—Dramatic scene on return voyage—Study of common people in Naples—In Rome again—Supreme happiness—Art studies, and discoveries as to his own talents—Study of music with Kayser—Maddalena Riggi—Faustina—Sad farewell to Rome—Florence—Parma—Milan—Return to Weimar—Significance of the Italian journey—Clear consciousness of his true calling—Complete harmony of his nature—Literary work—Seraphic tendency overcome —Poetry of humanity in its totality—The thirteenth *Römische Elegie*—Master of style—The typical—Plasticity—True art.

AN inexpressible feeling of delight coursed through Goethe's veins when he was rid of all fetters and speeding away toward the goal of his longing. So light-hearted and free, so happy, we have not seen him since his journey along the Rhine in 1774. He flees from the fatherland in great haste, as though he might be stopped on the way and compelled to return to Weimar. In order to feel perfectly safe he keeps his route a secret from every

one save his secretary, Seidel, and makes his incognito the more secure by crossing the Alps under the assumed name of Johann Philipp Möller. After thirty-one hours of uninterrupted travel he arrives in Ratisbon, where he spends a day. Then he travels a half-day and a night, makes a flying visit to Munich, and hastens on to Innsbruck.

When he catches the first glimpse of snow-capped peaks he reverently bares his head and greets them. The desire soon to have as many miles as possible between him and Weimar is accompanied by an impatient yearning for Italy. True, he is drawn aside to Salzburg, to the valley of the Ziller, the mines of Schwaz, and the salt-works of Hall; but he continues his journey by the shortest road and suppresses every further impulse to turn aside. "What do I not neglect for the sake of carrying out the one thought which has almost grown too old in my soul!" He is especially pleased with the situation of Innsbruck. "I wanted to stay there to-day," he writes on the 8th of September, "but I had no rest within me." Hence he tarries only three hours and then drives on up to the Brenner. There he rests a night and a day. "Up here in a well-built, clean, comfortable house, I look back once more to thee," he remarks in the diary intended for Frau von Stein. "From here the waters flow toward Germany and toward Italy, I hope to proceed in the latter direction to-morrow. How strange that twice before I stood on such a spot, rested, but did not cross over! Even now I shall not believe it, until I am down there."

Late in the evening he resumes his journey. The carriage descends at full speed. Sorry as he is to traverse this remarkable region with "terrible rapidity" and at night, like an owl, nevertheless he rejoices at the mad rush of air in his wake, as he speeds toward the realisation of his dreams. At nine o'clock in the morning he arrives in Bozen, just in time for the fair; he would like to look about a little, but "the impulse and the unrest which pursue him" will not let him delay, and so he journeys on through the day as far as Trent.

Here he feels the first breath of Italian atmosphere: luxuriant vegetation, warm air, gay life of the people. How well he feels and how much at home! "Everything is planted so promiscuously that it seems as if one thing must smother another. Vine-trellises, maize, buckwheat, mulberry trees, fruit trees, walnut trees, and quince trees. . . . The people wandering about remind one of the dearest pictures: the tied-up braids of the women, the bare chests and light jackets of the men, the splendid oxen which they drive home from market, the sumpter asses. . . . And now, when in the mild air of evening the few clouds rest on the mountains, standing still rather than drifting, and immediately after sunset the shrill sound of the locust begins to be heard, it seems to me as if I had been born and reared here and were just returning from a whaling voyage to Greenland. I welcome everything, even the dust of the 'fatherland,' which often gets deep on the roads, and of which I have seen nothing for so long." "If any one who lives in the south were to read this," he continues, "he would consider me very childish. Ah! what I here write I have long known, since I have been suffering with thee under an evil sky, and now I am glad to feel this pleasure, by way of exception, which we should enjoy as one of the eternal blessings of nature." He is also happy that he has no servant or guide with him. "By being waited on continually one becomes prematurely old and decrepit. . . . Every beggar shows me the way, and I speak with the people I meet as if we had known each other for a long time."

But Trent is not his abiding-place. He is still on imperial soil and the political environment influences his mood. After one day's stay he departs, passing through Roveredo on his way to Lake Garda, whose beauty charms him but cannot hold him fast. He rows along both shores almost their entire length and lands at Bardolino, where he takes a carriage for Verona. He arrives at one o'clock on the 14th of September, an extremely hot day. He is now on the soil of ancient Italy. "Yes, my beloved, I have

finally arrived here, here where I should have been long ago; many of the hard places in my life would have been made easier." He now becomes calm, and gives himself up to the gentle influence of his surroundings.

He is most absorbed in the monuments of antiquity, the Arena, and the smaller works of art in the Museo Lapidario, especially the reliefs and architectural fragments. Even in the inferior things he recognises a glorious epoch. The gravestone reliefs with their simple, touching representations move him to tears. "The breeze which is wafted from the tombs of the ancients comes laden with fragrance, as if it crossed a mound of roses." "Here are no armoured knights on their knees awaiting a happy resurrection: here the artist has simply portrayed the every-day life of men. They do not fold their hands, they do not look up toward heaven: they are what they were, they stand together, they take an interest in each other, they love one another." Of modern works it is the pictures that attract him. What Verona has to offer is nothing of great importance, yet he is pleased to discover that even the stars of second and third magnitude, which are hardly known by name at a distance, here begin to glitter, and it is they that make the artistic firmament of Italy so vast and rich. The Gothic tombs of the Scaligers, on the other hand, and the churches of every style (among them the beautiful Romanesque San Zeno) leave him cold.

Goethe becomes completely Italianised in Verona. In Roveredo he had been highly pleased that he no longer found any one who understood German, so that he was obliged to speak Italian, "the beloved language"; here he puts on Italian dress and learns the Italian's peculiar gestures and movements. He desires that he shall nowhere be recognised as a northern bear; he wants to associate with Italians as an Italian. Probably no traveller from the north has ever embraced Italian life with greater enthusiasm.

In this state of delight everything seems to him beautiful, agreeable, good; even obnoxious things his humour renders tolerable, if not agreeable. Everything northern,

on the other hand, is gloomy and unrefreshing to him. Especially is he unable to rid himself of the idea that at home the sky is always overhung with clouds and imprisons men in the cold and darkness. He recurs to this thought continually. After a rain he sees clouds hanging on the Alps. "Now that is all drifting to the north and will make your days dark and cold." Again: "We Cimmerians in the eternal mist and gloom scarcely know what day is like, and it is all the same to us whether it is day or night; for what hour can we enjoy out under the open sky?" And so he continues in the same tone, as if he had really just returned from Greenland.

After a sojourn of five days he leaves Verona and moves on to Vicenza. In Vicenza there is little or nothing beside the structures of Palladio. These almost overwhelm him. In the free, noble application of antique architectural elements and designs, such as are seen to best advantage in the Basilica (the old Palazzo della Ragione) and the Teatro Olimpico, he finds something divine, something truly poetical. He revels in them every day and cannot leave them. He remains seven full days in the city to which the traveller usually devotes as many hours. Aside from the architecture of Palladio he is so entranced by the city's lovely situation amid richly cultivated hills, which, with their gentle lines, lead the eye away to the Alps, that he proposes to make it the home of Mignon, and cannot suppress the wish some day to live here with Frau von Stein. "But," he adds with a sigh, "we are for ever banished from it; if one wished to live here one would have to turn Catholic immediately in order to have any share in the lives of men."

To share in the lives of men by mingling with them and living with them as an equal was the need he felt most keenly since he had doffed the coat of a privy councillor. As on the road, so also in Vicenza he seeks to satisfy this need as far as possible, and we are reminded of Wetzlar ways when we see him going among the people in the market-place, chatting with them, plying them with questions, amusing himself with the children, etc. These ex-

periences bring him to a realisation of what he has missed in Weimar: "What miserable, lonesome creatures we have to be in the small sovereign states, where a man, especially in my position, is permitted to converse with almost no one who has not some petition to present." Reluctantly he leaves the friendly city, where he has enjoyed the further pleasure of working at his *Iphigenie*.

He makes a much shorter stay in the larger city of Padua, where little interests him apart from the excellent pictures by Mantegna. The church of S. Antonio he justly considers barbarous; the angular spirituality of the frescos by Giotto in this church, at that time well preserved, and of those so much admired nowadays in the Madonna dell' Arena, affords no real pleasure to the poet, who longs for brilliant colouring, and noble form, and roundness; and Donatello's great equestrian statue of Gattamelata he passes by in silence as ungreek. On the other hand, he is delighted with a fan palm in the Botanical Garden (now called in his honour Palma di Goethe), which in the various stages in the development of its separate parts offers a fine verification of his botanical ideas.

After a stay of forty-eight hours he took a boat down the Brenta and arrived in Venice,[75] the Queen of the Adriatic, on the afternoon of September 28th. As his boat sailed into the wonderful island city which had played such a rôle in his fancy since early youth, his soul was filled with solemn awe. "Now, God be thanked, Venice is no longer to me the mere word, the hollow name, which has so often tormented me, me, the mortal enemy of empty words."

Venice was on the decline, but her splendour was still great enough to make an indelible impression upon the traveller. Her dominion extended from Lake Como to Istria, and embraced the Ionian Islands; among the cities subject to her were Bergamo, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, and Padua. She still possessed an imposing fleet of war and commercial vessels, and a stately arsenal. Although her commerce with Asia and Northern Europe had ceased, she had still a considerable trade with the Mediterranean

countries. Everything that was brought to Venice came by ship and mostly across the sea, for the railroad had not yet come to divert commerce to the land and transform Venice into a continental city. There were still to be found within her precincts a numerous nobility, representatives of independent states, ambassadors, and agents of every nation. Hence on the city's water-streets the traffic was entirely different from that of to-day. Whereas nowadays only a few freight boats and a few gondolas with tourist passengers glide through the canals, then there were swarms of vessels, large as well as small, and plain and ornamental barques of every description. The life of the people still possessed a peculiar importance and independence, for justice was still meted out in public squares, the notary still drew up public documents for everybody, the gondolier still sang from Tasso, and the ancient rhapsodist still lived in the guise of the public story-teller. There was a busy, noisy throng from midnight to midnight, and each man felt and asserted his own importance—a double attraction for our poet, accustomed to a sleepy inland city, where everybody did obeisance to the sovereign and the official. And yet the republic was not lacking in princely splendour. To be sure, the Doge was no longer the autocratic ruler of the sea, but he preserved his glorifying pomp; and when on solemn occasions he, with his attendants, slowly approached the land in gilded barques, awaited on the shore by the clergy and monastic orders with lighted candles, and when over carpeted bridges first the *savii* disembarked in long violet robes, then the senators in long red robes, and when the Doge himself followed in his golden Phrygian cap, long golden robe, and ermine mantle, with three pages carrying his train, while fifty nobles in dark red cloaks brought up the rear, this was a sight by the side of which corresponding scenes in Germany were but shabby, distorted imitations. "With us," jestingly remarks the poet, who had seen such a pageant, "the greatest festivities that one can imagine are celebrated in short coats and with guns on our shoulders."

These brilliant processions occurred within the confines of a city every foot of which had been reclaimed from the sea, and for the building of which every tile, every stone, every timber had been brought from miles away, and for the preservation of which care and diligence had to be exercised year in and year out. In spite of these difficulties the determined Venetians had not been satisfied with sheltering their persons and their wares within bare, serviceable walls; they had created an unheard-of wealth of splendid palaces and churches, which even to-day are the wonder of travellers from the north. The poet, who observed all this with an attentive eye, felt a profound respect for the beaver republic and, as on a former occasion in the canton of Bern, here also the democratic instincts of his nature were stirred. "It is a great work of united human strength, a glorious monument, not of a ruler, but of a people. And even if their lagoons are filling up, their commerce is on the decline, and their might has fallen, this does not render the organisation and nature of the republic a whit less venerable."

He takes pains to investigate this great life in all its phases; roams about through the tangle of streets and canals, studies the palaces and churches, the pictures and sculptures, inspects the wharves and sea-walls, attends the many theatres, and observes the people in all their activities, in every quarter, and at every hour of the day.

The sea, which he here beholds for the first time, makes a deep impression upon him. But he is not satisfied with mere esthetic enjoyment of the boundless expanse of water pulsating with rhythmical wave-beats; he immediately turns his attention to the peculiar qualities of the strand flora and the lower forms of marine animals; and he is glad that so many things now become to him a part of nature which have hitherto been only museum curios.

It was a rich fund of significant, interesting, and instructive impressions that Goethe received from the remarkable city. But the works of Palladio triumphed over all.

Palladio! Palladio! comes the echo over and over from the pages of the chapter on Venice in his diary. He passes by a hundred great and beautiful things, such as the Titians[76] in SS. Giovanni e Paolo and the Frari, and the Library of Sansovino, or refers to them briefly, such as the treasures in the Doge's Palace; whereas he is always going into ecstasies over Palladio.

Goethe's development before the Italian journey had prepared the way for the overwhelming influence of Palladio. In Strasburg two flowers sprang up out of the soil of Goethe's conception of art. The one, his enthusiasm for the Gothic, shot up to a great height, but soon withered away; the other, his love for Raphael and the antique, standing modestly beside it, grew up slowly but steadily. The antique ruins in Niederbronn and the plaster casts in Mannheim, together with Homer and Pindar, had sufficed to raise the antique far above the Gothic in his estimation. He peopled his room in Frankfort with statues of the Greek gods, and supplemented his collection with etchings of the most important works of antiquity. The more he inwardly drifted away from the Storm-and-Stress period, the more also from the Gothic, which doubtless became to him in time a symbol of the movement—heaven-storming confusion. *Iphigenie* supplants *Götz*. In Weimar we no longer hear Goethe speak of the once so proudly boasted "German" architecture. On the other hand, he adds further to his collection of casts of antique sculptures, and makes drawings of antique orders of columns. The teachings of Winckelmann and Oeser are again revived. Goethe's whole being strives after great, noble beauty. But he can find it only in truth, and truth manifests itself to him only in simplicity, as is the case in nature. In this way he returns to noble simplicity and quiet greatness as the highest qualities of the beautiful. True, he saw in the Gothic pillar and pointed arch both greatness and beauty, but if we take the church as the complete expression of Gothic art, the ensemble lacked repose within, and, without, not merely repose, but simplicity and truth as well. Pillar

and arch strove restlessly, endlessly upward, and lack of repose was increased without by the pointed towers which crowned the façade, and the wilderness of ornamentation which enveloped the body and sought to achieve the great by a multiplication of the small.[77] This ornamentation was not merely the opposite of simplicity and repose, but, like the towers, was wholly lacking in organic necessity, that is, in truth; indeed it was not infrequently a structural absurdity. Thus Gothic art was offensive to Goethe's feelings, which demanded quiet beauty, great in its simplicity, and to his understanding, which demanded constructive harmony and regularity. Both he found nowhere but in the Greek style, which at the same time breathed an air of cheerfulness that was an extraordinary tonic to the serious soul of the poet, who had suffered so much martyrdom in Weimar. But how should he harmonise Greek style with modern demands? A simple revival such as was often practised could not satisfy an artistic mind like Goethe's. But should there not be artists whose creative genius could adapt Greek architecture organically to modern conditions, and thus make its great beauty available for Christian times?

Apparently Goethe had expected something of the kind from Palladio. As far back as 1782 he had tried to get this artist's treatise on architecture, but had only been able to secure etchings of his structures in Vicenza. Now he saw the monuments themselves with his own eyes, and we have heard what a charm they exerted over him. "Palladio was inwardly a very great man," is his first expression in Vicenza. He feels that he must seek to follow more closely the traces of the activity of this genius. The need seems to him the more urgent, as further great works of the master await him in Venice. In Padua he succeeds in buying Palladio's book on architecture; in Venice he studies it. "A good spirit moved me to seek this book with so much zeal. . . . Now the scales fall from my eyes! The mist is parting and I recognise objects." The book makes him "very happy" for days. He seeks "right

heartily" to make it his own, and, not satisfied with reading, he follows Palladio's outlines with his pencil. He eagerly seeks out the chief creations of the master in Venice: the churches, S. Giorgio and Il Redentore, and the monastery, Carità. In the churches he does not fail to recognise many unevennesses resulting from the desire of the artist, embarrassed by many other considerations, to unite the façade of the antique temple with a church crowned by a cupola, crossed by a transept, and, as in the case of S. Giorgio, provided with more than one nave. Nevertheless Goethe admires the genius with which the artist made himself master of the difficulties, and, especially in the case of Il Redentore, by the simple means of form and proportion within and without produced a church of incomparable purity, chastity, and simplicity, that to the eye resolves all conflicting elements into most noble harmony and organic regularity. But his greatest achievement was in the Carità, where there were no limitations. Here the church was already built, and it was only a question of a habitation for the monks, which under an Italian sky he could very well design after an antique model, without being compelled to make any concessions to climate. Unfortunately only the tenth part of the plan was executed and this was later surrounded by unspeakably prosaic structures. But even in these surroundings the poet discovers the spark of divine genius in Palladio's conception, and makes three or four pilgrimages to the master's great work. "One could spend years in the contemplation of such a creation." "If it had been finished there would probably not be a more perfect piece of architecture in the world." Unless one possesses the architectural eye of a Goethe one cannot, even with the help of the plans in Palladio's *Architettura*, rise to such enthusiasm. But it may be permissible to refer to the fact that Jakob Burckhardt, the greatest connoisseur of Renaissance art, considers Goethe's enthusiasm for the Carità well founded.

If there was anything that could confirm Goethe in his long-cherished predilection for the antique it was the study

of Palladio. Under the weight of this artist's words and works his radical renunciation of the Gothic is made permanent. When he sees in the Palazzo Farsetti the cast of a part of the entablature of the temple of Antoninus and Faustina (in Rome) his long-restrained anger at the Gothic breaks out. He compares "the projecting presence" of this splendid architectural work with the Gothic style, and exclaims: "This is indeed something different from the crouching saints of our Gothic ornamentation, piled one upon another on corbels,—something different from our tobacco-pipe columns, pointed turrets, and flowery pinnacles. These, thank God, I am now rid of for ever." This is a fierce abjuration of his sometime youthful love.

Whether Goethe was right in his youth, or after he had reached maturity, cannot be answered categorically, especially as the final reasons for the decision are as subjective as in one's answer to such a question as, "Which is the more beautiful, a forest of evergreen trees or a forest of deciduous trees?" But this much may be said, that Goethe confines himself here to externals, which are not the essentials of Gothic art, and, furthermore, that no matter if a higher constructive and decorative unity, and a greater repose be conceded the Greek style as compared with the Gothic, the fancy and profundity of Christian, especially of Germanic nations, cannot exhaust themselves within the limitations of constructive regularity, or of the reposeful Greek line of beauty. Goethe himself recognised this in the field of poetry. In his *Anmerkungen zu Rameaus Neffe* (1805) he says: "One cannot refer us of the north exclusively to those models [Greeks and Romans]. . . . If the monstrous had not come in contact with the insipid through the romantic turn of unenlightened centuries, where should we find a *Hamlet*, a *Lear*, an *Adoration of the Cross*, a *Principe Constante?* It is our duty courageously to maintain our position on the height of these barbarian advantages, inasmuch as we shall probably never attain to the antique ground of vantage." He himself was both

consciously and unconsciously faithful to this duty in the greatest achievement of his life.

In later years, under the influence of his young friend, the enthusiastic champion of the Gothic, Sulpiz Boisserée, Goethe, seeking to give the despised style its due historical recognition, judged it less harshly; but he never again went beyond a cool, qualified recognition of its merits.

The most important result for our consideration here is the fact that Goethe, while in Italy, turned with full determination to the antique, and by the side of it would endure its imitation and further development in the Renaissance only when accomplished with the profound understanding of a Palladio.

With his hostility to the Gothic, Goethe could not do justice to the Italian buildings in that style. He either ignored them—and this was usually the case—or saw only their defects, and condemned them. Thus in the great and wonderful Palace of the Doges he saw only the short, massive columns of the lower gallery, which seemed to run into the ground, and allowed this fact to destroy for him the effect of the whole structure. On the other hand, we will not lay it to the charge of the Gothic ingredients in St. Mark's that for this cathedral, which so completely captivates our fancy at first sight, Goethe has nothing but scorn, and says that its architecture is worthy of all the nonsense that may ever have been taught or practised in it. This hodgepodge of Gothic, Byzantine, and Romanesque elements, which looks like the dream of a child that builds itself a structure out of all sorts of precious stones, gay colours, gold, statues, pillars, and pillarets, could find no mercy before the severity of his great spirit.

But all the more extravagant is the praise he lavished on the small number of antique specimens in Venice: the collections in the Library, in the Palazzo Farsetti, the marble lions in front of the Arsenal, the bronze horses of St. Mark's, and a few bas-reliefs in the church of Santa Giustina with spirits "whose beauty transcends all conception."

Goethe's sojourn in Venice had lasted seventeen days. He had made good use of his time in allowing the strange, unique picture of the city to impress itself upon him. "The first period of my journey is ended; may Heaven bless the others!" At the end of the second stood Rome.

In the moment when this goal looms up before him everything that lies between is overshadowed by it. With the same fervour with which he originally longed for Italy he now longs for Rome; and the same torturing fear that some obstacle may come up between him and his goal again pursues him to the very gates of the Eternal City. After a flying visit to Ferrara and Cento, on the 16th and 17th of October, he anticipates great joy from the sight of Raphael's *Saint Cecilia* in Bologna.[78] Nevertheless he is impatient: "I cannot express how the nearness of Rome draws me on. If I were to yield to my impatience, I should see nothing on the way, but should hasten straight on. One more fortnight, and a longing of thirty years will be quieted. And yet even now it seems to me as if it were not possible."

Thus he writes on the evening of the 17th. On the 18th, however, he has formed the "very pacifying" resolution to shorten the fortnight by merely passing through Florence and making straight for Rome. "Nothing can afford me any pleasure till that first need is satisfied; yesterday in Cento, to-day here, I hasten on, anxious, as it were, that the time may pass by." On the 19th, toward evening, after he has seen the *Saint Cecilia*, he determines again to write a calm word of sound sense: "For during these last days it was impossible for me. I know not how it will be this evening. The world is running away from beneath my feet, and an unutterable passion is driving me on. The sight of the Raphael and a walk toward the mountains have pacified me somewhat and given me a slight bond of attachment to this city." He counsels himself well, saying: "I will be composed and wait. I have possessed myself in patience these thirty years; I shall certainly survive another fortnight."

A few more days are to be devoted to the city, which has much to offer him in the realms of art and nature. A geological excursion on the 20th affords him a "perfectly beautiful and happy day," and we begin to think he has again found the ease and comfort with which he enjoyed his travel from Verona to Venice, when we are suddenly astonished at his remark: "It seems that Heaven hears my prayer. I have a driver to take me to Rome and shall leave here the day after to-morrow." But he does not wait for the day after to-morrow. The very next morning he is sitting in his carriage and driving up the slope of the Apennines.

On the 23rd he arrives in Florence, the birthplace of the Renaissance. Glorious treasures of antique and modern art are here preserved, but they have no power over him. He runs through the city in three hours and then continues his journey. Slowly—much too slowly for his impatience—the journey drags on through the valleys of the Apennines. With the miserable inns, miserable carriages, miserable money, and extortions he has his daily troubles; but even if he were to be taken to Rome on the wheel of Ixion he would be satisfied. On the evening of the 25th he comes to the city where Raphael was educated, Perugia, filled with works of the Umbrian school of painting. He continues his journey on the following morning without having seen a single one of them. "Until I reach Rome I do not care to open my eyes or lift up my heart. I have three more days to travel and it seems to me as if I should never reach my destination." As he nears Rome his impatience reaches a feverish height. From the earliest grey of morning till nightfall he drives on without stopping. He sleeps with his clothes on so that he "may be ready at once in the morning." He pays no attention to Raphael's blissful *Madonna* in Foligno (now in the Vatican). He seeks out only what he can include without lengthening his journey, and, in case of doubt, always gives the preference to the antique. In Assisi, for example, he makes a very careful study of the temple of Minerva that has been converted into a church,

but does not bestow a single look upon the remarkable, and, artistically, so important Franciscan Convent. On the evening of the 27th he writes with oppressed heart: "Rome! Rome! . . . Two more nights, and, if the angel of the Lord does not destroy us on the way, we shall be there!" On the following evening his heart is cheered with a shimmer of the approaching happiness: "To-morrow evening in Rome! After that there will be nothing left for me to desire, except again to see thee and my little circle in good health." Fate brings him to Rome on the following day, well and happy. In tremendous excitement he dashes off two short notes in his diary:

"*Evening.*—My second word is to be addressed to thee, now that I have rendered hearty thanks to Heaven for bringing me hither. I can say nothing except that I am here. I have sent for Tischbein.

"*Night.*—Tischbein came to see me. A delightfully good fellow. At last I am beginning to live and I adore my genius. More to-morrow."

But no more was added the next day. Late in the evening of the 30th he wrote: "Just a word after a very rich day. I saw this morning the most important ruins of ancient Rome, this evening St. Peter's, and now I am initiated. I have moved to Tischbein's, and shall now have a rest from all inn-life and travel. Farewell."

These are the first words written after his arrival in Rome. In their disconnectedness, condensation, — one might almost say, in their breathlessness,—they, together with the prayer of gratitude which he first of all sends up to Heaven, reflect with unsurpassable faithfulness the feelings and impressions with which he is overwhelmed. How much more gentle, more composed is the tone of the introduction to the chapter on Rome in his *Italienische Reise*, copied from the letter which he addressed to the Duke on the sixth day!

Goethe was in Rome. The dream of his youth was fulfilled. Twice before he had had it in his power to realise this dream. The first time he was drawn back by love, the second time by consideration for the Duke, but, above all,

by a vague, instinctive feeling that the fulness of time was not yet come. "Everything at the right time!" he one day exclaimed with reference to the linking together of events in his life. It would be impossible to foretell what would have been the results if he had descended into Italy from the St. Gothard in 1775. Either he would have remained in Rome and become a Roman, like Winckelmann and so many others, or, if antique and Renaissance art had not then had the power to overcome the Gothic in him, and the mild Italian landscape had not then been able to counterbalance the Ossianic romanticism of the Alps, he would have returned home more at sea than when he had gone thither, and, under the burden of the unadjustable disagreements with his father, the narrowness of civic life, and the sorrow of his rupture with Lili, he might have destroyed his life. In 1779 the journey would have been a flying visit, arousing more longing than it satisfied, and it would have taken away the best part of the healing power of the Italian sky for him in later years. In 1786 his need of this healing was surely undiminished. Only as the greatness and beauty of the south presented itself to him in the full power and splendour of its newness were the many signs of old age that had begun to be visible in his whole being removed, making him capable of new, fresh life. "I count a second birthday, a true regeneration, from the day I entered Rome" (December 2, 1786). "I have been restored again to the enjoyment of life, to the enjoyment of history, poetry, and antiquities" (January 6, 1787). "I am living a new youth" (February 6, 1787). Such is the refrain which rings through his letters from Rome. The process of rejuvenation, which had begun when he inhaled the noonday air at the southern foot of the Brenner, was completed in the atmosphere of the artistic world of Rome.

Rome, with its superabundance of great works and memories, surrounds him like a heaving sea. "Every day some new, remarkable object; daily new pictures, great and strange, and an *ensemble* of which one may long think and dream, but which the imagination can never comprehend."

He strenuously struggles to make himself master of the world which lies open before him. But the exertion is delightful, and well may he compare himself to a happy Orestes, whom the Furies no longer pursue, and whom the Muses and Graces and the whole host of the blissful gods overwhelm with revelations. So rich is the harvest of each day that he is no longer able to give an account of it in a diary. He is compelled to limit himself to occasional letters, and in these to important things and generalities.

It is above all ancient Rome which rises up out of the ruins in mighty grandeur before him, and he enhances the effect by seeking to reconstruct, not merely the ruins, but also the life which at one time animated them.

> Hier befolg' ich den Rat, durchblättre die Werke der Alten
> Mit geſchäftiger Hand, täglich mit neuem Genuß.*

On the other hand, he hastens past the Christian Rome of the popes of the Middle Ages and modern times, for it has nothing of profound interest for him. Even in the field of Christian art his appreciation is confined almost exclusively to painting, and that, too, within much more circumscribed limits than in the other Italian cities. Of the famous sculptures of Christian times he mentions, as heretofore, none in particular; of the monumental buildings only St. Peter's, and even this with reserve, laying the chief stress on the greatness of the mass. When he wishes to name the works which have made the deepest impression on him he mentions the façade of the Pantheon, the *Apollo Belvedere*, the colossal busts of the *Jupiter d'Otricoli*[79] and the *Juno Ludovisi*, and the frescos of Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel.

Michael Angelo is accordingly the only one of the more modern artists who exerted as strong an influence on him as the ancients. His greatness gave him a place beside them; but, be it noted, only in his frescos, which have no antique rival. In the poet's estimation the plastic works of

* Here I follow the counsel I find in the works of the ancients,
Turning them busily o'er, daily with pleasure renewed.

Michael Angelo in Rome (*Moses*, *Pietà*), which are certainly not lacking in greatness, pale into insignificance beside the antique sculptures. With the standard which he received from Michael Angelo for the judgment of painting, the quiet beauty of Raphael, who had seemed to him, as he stood before the *St. Cecilia* in Bologna, the painter without a peer, could arouse within him here only a subdued pleasure. The cycle of pictures in the Villa Farnesina (*Amor* and *Psyche*), and the *Transfiguration* he calls in a dry, good-natured way, "old acquaintances," friends, that he has made at a distance by correspondence, and now meets personally; and he complains of the pictures in the stanzas and the loggias that they are too faded, whereas the blackened frescos in the Sistine Chapel, far from disturbing him, only stimulate him to take three times the pains to study them.

In short, greatness is his first requirement in a work of art. One sees what pleasure he feels as his soul is broadened by the greatness of what he sees, after he has grown languid under the petty tasks and details of his official life in Saxe-Weimar. Now he is convinced that greatness is nothing more than the acme of truth. Accordingly the works of the ancients are great only because they are true in conception and execution. He finds this most clearly revealed in works of architecture. Their greatness is never the expression of an arbitrary fancy, and never a misrepresentation to cover up inner pettiness and hollowness. The Romans never built a spacious palace to give the false appearance of greatness to a petty prince, who occasionally lived in it with his courtiers, but because such an abode was in keeping with the greatness of the position and business of a world-ruler. They built aqueducts, not for amusement's sake, but for the purpose of furnishing the people with water. The same is true of their temples, theatres, race-courses, and baths. And as the spirit, so the body of their structures: walls of solid rock, no imitation stone of whitewash, plaster of Paris, and wood; no pasted-on decorations, no finical ornaments, no urns or puppets;

everything genuine, solid material with natural and appropriate adornment.

In reality the contrast is not as harsh as we, following Goethe's indications, have here represented it to be; but he saw it and felt it to be so, even before he reached Rome. When he viewed in Spoleto the antique aqueduct which spans a gorge with its great arches he said: "Now this is the third * work of the ancients that I have seen. . . . Now I feel for the first time how justly I hated all capricious structures, such as the Winterkasten on the Weissenstein [Wilhelmshöhe Castle near Kassel] for example, a nothing for nothing's sake, a monstrous épergne of confectionery, and a thousand other things in the same category. They are all still-born; for that which has no true inward existence has no life and cannot be great or become great."

Even if the Roman structures in Verona, Assisi, and Spoleto had awakened such profound joy in his soul, his delight must have been much greater when he saw the majestic works of the ancients in Rome, from the Pantheon and the Colosseum to the tomb of Cecilia Metella on the Appian Way, and the miles of aqueducts in the Campagna. "Here one must become solid," is a pregnant expression of his from the beginning of his sojourn in Rome.

It was a glorious thing for Goethe to revel in this great world. And to heighten his enjoyment the circumstances of his life in Rome left nothing to be desired. He had taken lodgings with the painter Tischbein, an original nature, of cheerful instincts, and lived very happily with him and his young housemates, the painters Schütz and Bury. He still preserved his incognito, throwing it off only to a small circle of German artists and amateurs of art, at the same time pledging each of them not to betray his presence, nor mention his rank or name. To this circle belonged, in addition to the above-mentioned: Privy Councillor Reiffenstein, for the last twenty-four years a resident of Rome, and exceptionally well informed on matters of interest in the

* The first was the Amphitheatre in Verona, the second the temple of Minerva in Assisi.

city; the studious archæologist, Hirt; the writer, Karl Philipp Moritz, a man of gloomy meditation and fine taste; the sculptor, Trippel, who modelled the Apollonian bust of Goethe; the young Swiss painter, Heinrich Meyer, a thorough investigator of all questions of art; charming, tender, wise Angelika Kauffmann, highly esteemed by Goethe, as by everybody, on account of her noble womanhood and lovely art; and her husband, the Italian painter, Zucchi. In his associations with these excellent people Goethe felt at home, and joined them in work and recreation. In his turn he aroused in his friends a feeling of pleasure and admiration, although they were surprised that "the man of such lively emotions possessed so much gravity and repose." He himself confesses that, if he had allowed them to have their way, they would have committed a hundred follies with him and in the end would have crowned him on the Capitol. To make his happiness complete Heaven put on its most friendly smile. A sunny, springlike winter, such as Rome had not experienced from time immemorial, favoured a most profitable life in the open, and day after day bathed the Eternal City, with its cupolas and palaces, its ruins and its cypresses, in a flood of cheerful light and soft haze.

The joyful Roman symphony was suddenly interrupted by a shrill, discordant note. The first news had arrived from Weimar. How had Frau von Stein received his flight and the veil of secrecy in which he had chosen to envelop his movements? Two days before his departure Goethe had written to his beloved that at the end of September she would be in possession of a letter that would give her his address. September passed, and likewise October. Indeed the middle of November was approaching, and still she did not know whither her fugitive friend had turned. To be sure, she had received two letters from him after long intervals of waiting; but they were short, and, contrary to his promise, maintained a stubborn silence as to his place of abode. By so doing he for a long time voluntarily deprived

himself of communications from her. What was she to think of this conduct? Was he the same man to whom for years every line from her had seemed a coveted gift, and to whom after their union of souls in the bonds of love a few days of separation had seemed a hard sacrifice? Was he the same man who had written to her from Eisenach in June, 1784: "I am told that in thirty-one hours I could be in Frankfort, and I cannot entertain the most fleeting thought of going thither; my nature is so drawn to thee that there is no nerve left to perform the other duties of my heart"; and who had confessed to her in August of the same year in soulful verses, that the overruling star of her love bound him irresistibly to her and to Weimar? Was he the same man who had assured her innumerable times, and had verified his assurances by his actions, that a boundless confidence in her had become with him a necessity; who only recently, in July, had written to her: "Dearest, only being to whom my whole soul can reveal and devote itself"? Why had he on this occasion so carefully concealed from her his purposes and his whereabouts? May he perchance have supposed that, if it was a question of a journey for study or recreation—even if for never so long—she would prevent his going or conjure him back? If not, what else could his flight and concealment mean but a renunciation of her, a betrayal? In that case his loving words in the last letters from Karlsbad and the first ones from Italy were nothing but empty phrases with which he wished to appease her and extenuate his conduct.

Such must have been the train of thought which passed through Frau von Stein's mind, and we should feel no occasion for surprise if her pent-up feelings had burst forth in intense or violent accusations. But her moderate soul was far from doing such a thing. Her unutterable pain at the apparent loss of her lover found its only expression in gentle, touching lamentations:

Ihr Gedanken fliehet mich,
Wie der Freund von mir entwich!

Ihr erinnert mich der Stunden,
Die so liebevoll verschwunden.
O! Wie bin ich nun allein!
Ewig werd' ich einsam sein.

Was mir seine Liebe gab,
Hüll' ich wie ins tiefe Grab.
Ach, es sind Erinn'rungsleiden
Süßer, abgeschied'ner Freuden.

. . . . .

Schutzgeist, hüll' mir nun noch ein
Seines Bildes letzten Schein,
Wie er mir sein Herz verschlossen,
Das er sonst so ganz ergossen,
Wie er sich von meiner Hand
Stumm und kalt hat weggewandt.*

Apparently Goethe had meanwhile taken no account of what a deep and painful impression the very secrecy of his journey might make upon her. He himself felt so firmly bound to her, tarried with her in thought so constantly, and sought so zealously, by means of the diary which he wrote for her, to have her share all the good and beautiful things which he enjoyed, that fear of a misinterpretation never

* Now, my thoughts, ye take to flight
As my friend escaped from sight!
Bygone hours ye call to mind,
Hours in love's sweet dream enshrined.
O, poor, lonely, lonely me!
Ever shall I lonely be.

What his love to me once gave
I conceal as in the grave.
Ah! 't is mem'ry's sorrow sore
Over sweetest joys of yore.

. . . . .

Guardian spirit, veil from view
How he bade me last adieu;
How his heart was tightly sealed
Which erstwhile stood all revealed;
How my touch of love he spurned,
Cold and speechless from me turned.

once entered his mind. And how often he interspersed his accounts of the day with express words of most cordial, tender feeling for the far-away mistress of his heart! "As usual, my love, when the Ave Maria della Sera is prayed I turn my thoughts to thee. However, I must not express myself thus, for they are with thee all the day" (Padua, September 27th). "After a day happily and well spent an inexpressibly sweet feeling always comes over me when I sit down to write to thee" (Venice, September 29th). "Sitting again in a cave which a year ago suffered from an earthquake I turn my prayer to thee, my dear guardian spirit. I now feel for the first time how spoiled I am. To live with thee ten years and be loved by thee, and now out in a strange world! I foresaw it, and only extreme necessity could compel me to take the step. Let us have no other thought than of ending our days together" (Terni, October 27th).

How many painful days Goethe might have spared himself and Frau von Stein if he had only seen to it that these documents of his continued love reached their destination at the same time as his first letters from Rome! By some remarkable oversight, which can be explained only by his dream-life in Italy, the first part of his diary—the part up to and including Venice—did not reach her till Christmas; the second part arrived at New Year's, 1787. The first letters from Rome in which he betrayed his secret had arrived in Weimar in the middle of November. But there was none among them for Frau von Stein, a new and bitter offence to his beloved and a new corroboration of her suspicion. To be sure, Goethe, as we know, had dedicated to her the very first happy effusions after his arrival, but what did she know about it? They were recorded in his diary, which still lay in Rome.

Accordingly, Frau von Stein did what any other woman would have done in her place: as soon as she learned his address she wrote him a few lines which, to judge from his answer, were equivalent to dismissing him from her favour. He received the note on the 9th of December.

It came like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky. For days he is robbed of all enjoyment, and wanders about the ruins of Rome like a spiritless body. In the first flush of feeling he cannot understand the behaviour of his beloved and thinks he has cause to find fault with her. "And so that was all that thou hadst to say to a beloved friend who has so long been yearning for a good word from thee, and who has not spent a day, indeed not an hour since he left thee without thinking of thee. . . . I cannot tell thee how thy short note has rent my heart asunder. Farewell, my only love, and do not harden thy heart against me!" In a few days the mist rolls away from his eyes; he recognises his fault. On the 13th he writes: "O, my most beloved, if I could only put upon this sheet every good, true, and sweet word of love and friendship, could tell thee and assure thee that I am near, very near thee, and that I enjoy my life only for thy sake! Thy short note has pained me, but most of all because I have caused thee pain. Thou wilt keep silent toward me? Thou wilt take back the tokens of thy love? Thou canst not do that without suffering much, and I am to blame for it. But perhaps there is a letter from thee on the way, which will cheer me and comfort me; perhaps my diary has arrived in a favourable moment and rejoiced thee."

As a matter of fact a second letter from Frau von Stein did arrive soon, but, being an answer to his two hasty, rambling letters of November,* it was no more edifying than the first one. Nevertheless he thanks her for it. He is willing to forget the painful contents of the letter. "My love: I beg thee on bended knee, I implore thee, make it easier for me to return to thee, that I need not remain in banishment in the wide, wide world. Pardon me graciously the wrongs I have done thee, and lift me up. Write me long letters and tell me often how thou livest, that thou art well, and that thou lovest me. . . . Do not consider me parted from thee; nothing in the world can replace what I should lose in thee and in my relations there. . . .

* It took a letter sixteen days to go from Weimar to Rome.

That thou wast ill, ill through my fault, weighs more heavily upon my heart than I can tell thee. Pardon me; I myself am still uncertain whether I shall live or die, and no tongue can express what passed within my soul. My diaries must arrive some day and bring my heart to thee, and tell thee that thou hast all my love and that thou sharest it with no one. Farewell! Love me! In life and in death I am thine!" (December 23rd). Finally, on the 17th of January, a good letter arrives, containing consoling, friendly words. The diary has reached its destination and has produced the desired effect. "How it refreshes my soul!" exclaims Goethe over the letter. "Since the death of my sister nothing has so saddened me as the pain I have caused thee by my separation and silence. Thou seest how near my heart was to thee. Why did I not send thee the diary from every station! I can only say and repeat: 'Pardon, and let us live together again and more joyously'" (January 17, 1787). His former cheerfulness is restored and he is again able to jest in his letters to her: "I had to laugh at Frankenberg's caution that I must not fall in love here. Thou hast had as yet only one rival and I shall bring her to thee. It is a colossal head of Juno" (January 27th). Again he enjoys everything with his beloved in spirit; his monologues are again directed to her; his only wish is that he may be able to give her a great deal (February 1st). He begs her still to hold him dear, even if he is so odd. "I have so much to put up with in myself that I cannot relieve my friends of their share of the burden, least of all thee" (beginning of February).

Goethe kept postponing his journey to the south, much as he was drawn thither. At first he thought he could be satisfied with four weeks for his first sojourn in Rome; then he extended the period to eight weeks, and finally lengthened it to sixteen. He could not separate himself from the great city, even for a temporary absence, without having some clear and thorough conception of the treasures of art which it contained. Everything else interested him but little. He avoided studying social and political

conditions, in which he has elsewhere shown a keen interest, for fear that the Papal State, which he considered a model of abominable administration, might hinder the play of his imagination. He was likewise little edified by the theatre in Rome, which drew all its support from the formal drama, and by the church ceremonies, which he placed in the same category as the theatre. In both he saw nothing but a soulless display that could afford no pleasure to one in his frame of mind, which uncompromisingly valued things according to their intrinsic worth. "The Pope," he says, "is surely the best actor." Neither does the life of the common people have the same charm for him in Rome as in the other Italian cities. He takes part in the carnival without finding any real pleasure in it, because, as he says, the incredible noise that the people make lacks inward cheerfulness. His happiness is in art, and that, too,—be it once more emphasised—almost exclusively antique art. His inner life at that period is most cleverly symbolised in Tischbein's excellent portrait of him reclining in the midst of fragments of antique art.

After Goethe had enjoyed the works of the ancients esthetically he set to work to gain an historical understanding of them. He traced antique art back to Egypt and sought to gain a clear idea of the character and then of the epochs of the individual styles, and to determine them more definitely than had hitherto been done. It was of especially great value to him to compare the representation of the same subjects by different artists and epochs. The faculty of discovering relationships, no matter how remote in time or space, and of tracing the genesis of things, is extraordinarily helpful to him here, as in the natural sciences, and he wishes he only had the time to work over all the material and his ideas concerning it. "Winckelmann!—Alas, how much he has done and how much he has left to be desired!"

In the middle of February he makes a catalogue of the things he has not yet seen and is astonished at their number. The mass of what seems to him important becomes, in spite of all his industry, greater instead of smaller. Inscriptions,

coins, carved stones, to which he at first paid no attention, open to him new fields of study with a superabundance of material. Rome is constantly striking new roots down into his inner life, and only on the 22nd of February, when Vesuvius has a violent eruption, and fear of the summer heat in Sicily begins to agitate him, does he decide, at least for a time, to turn his back upon the beloved city.

Goethe did not travel alone. He took Tischbein along, as he wished to apply himself diligently to drawing, and did not wish to be deprived of his friend's eye and hand. After three beautiful days of travel via Velletri, the Pontine Swamps, Terracina, and Capua, they reached Naples. Although Goethe had since childhood been prepared for the charm of the Gulf of Naples, nevertheless, when the wonderful panorama unrolled before his eyes, he was completely enraptured. "You may say, narrate, paint what you will, here there is more than all of it put together. . . . I pardoned all who had lost their minds in Naples, and thought with emotion of my father, who had preserved an indelible impression of these objects." He calls Naples a paradise in which he lives in a sort of intoxicated self-forgetfulness. "I hardly recognise myself. Yesterday I said to myself: 'Either thou hast been crazy hitherto or thou art now.'" Rome on its small river in the desert Campagna now seems to him like an old, poorly located convent, when compared with the open situation of Naples in a land of plenty, and beside the broad sea strewn with haze-enveloped islands. Whereas in Rome he desired to study, here he wished only to live. One can observe, too, how his pleasure in the enjoyment of life grows in the fascinating, sensuous Neapolitan world. Leisurely and joyfully he strolls about in Naples and along the laughing borders of the gulf [80] in company with Tischbein and other new friends, such as the landscape painters, Kniep, and Philipp, and Georg Hackert. He does not shut himself off from a wider circle of acquaintances, as in Rome; he seeks it rather, and spends many happy hours with the unconventional Prinzesschen, and with Sir William Hamilton and his coquettish belle.

However, he carries on serious work at the same time. In Rome he was under the sway of art: here nature comes into the foreground. It is here that he gives utterance to the beautiful saying, that nature is the only book which has some great truth to offer on every page. Mineralogy, geology, zoölogy, and botany engage his attention in every nook and corner of the region so remarkable and rich in its natural history, and it doubtless happened that while his friends were amusing themselves with their ladies in frolicsome games on the shore, he stepped aside to hammer at rocks and investigate their composition or to collect plants and marine animals. Vesuvius, at that time in violent eruption, claimed the lion's share of his scientific interest. Three different times he ascended to the summit, and even in the presence of evident danger ventured boldly on that he might take accurate observations of the volcanic phenomena.

In the Portici Museum, where the articles excavated in Herculaneum were kept, as well as in Pompeii and Pæstum, he formed valuable impressions of art and antiquities. In Pæstum he for the first time stood in the presence of genuine Greek antiquity, at least in the temple of Poseidon, which is older than the Parthenon, and undoubtedly owes its origin to the pure Greek art of Lower Italy. At first the severe Doric style, with the closely crowded pillars in the shape of a truncated cone, seemed to him, accustomed to the neater forms of later periods, wearisome, indeed terrible. But in less than an hour he felt on friendly terms with the style and praised his genius for having let him behold with his own eyes these well-preserved ruins. Evidently it was the glorious temple of Poseidon which aroused in him this sentiment. Its pillars have, to be sure, the full force of the Doric style, but with this force is combined a nobility of proportion which lends them a stamp of solemn beauty. The excessive bulging and tapering of the pillars of the neighbouring temples, on the other hand, gives them a massive conical form which, at a short distance, is felt as wearisome.

For five weeks Goethe had allowed himself to be held by the charms of seductive Parthenope. It was now time to

take the journey to Sicily which he had meanwhile firmly determined upon. As Tischbein had business to attend to in Naples Goethe was obliged to seek some other fellow traveller. His choice fell upon Kniep, who was of about his own age, and on the excursions in the environs of Naples had proved a valuable companion, because of his agreeable nature and his cleverness in free-hand drawing.

In joyful expectation Goethe embarked on the vessel which was to take him to Sicily. "Sicily directs my thoughts to Asia and Africa, and it is no trifling matter to stand upon the wonderful spot toward which so many radii of the world's history converge." He also wished to try a sea voyage, as he had no conception of what it was like. His enjoyment of it, however, was very moderate. Nowadays, even with an unfavourable wind, one crosses over from Naples to Palermo in a little over twelve hours. It took Goethe four days to make the journey, and seasickness compelled him to spend most of the time in his cabin. After the confinement and discomfort of the voyage he was all the more deeply impressed with the landscape about Palermo as it lay before him in the luxurious garb of spring, and in the most favourable light. He could find no words to express the clearness of the contours, the softness of the whole scene, and the harmony of earth, sea, and sky. He was greeted by the fresh foliage of mulberry trees, evergreen oleanders, lemon hedges, blossoming buttercups, and anemones. The air was mild, warm, and fragrant; and above the scene the full moon arose from behind the foothills and glistened upon the sea. To him the most wonderful thing in the city itself was the public garden (Flora, or Villa Giulia) down by the roadstead. When he there strolled about through the arbours of orange and lemon trees, and his eyes fell upon rare plants he had never before seen; when the dark blue waves surged into the coves along the bay, and the odour of the sea-water was wafted up toward him, he believed himself transported to the island of the blissful Phæacians. The plot which he had sketched for a Nausikaa-drama, in which the Phæacian princess was to meet with a

tragic fate because of her unhappy love for Odysseus, was again taken up and more carefully worked over, indeed some passages were finished. He desired that the atmosphere of nature in the poem should be a memento of his life on the island of Sicily. Unfortunately, the drama never progressed in written form beyond the beginning made in Palermo. Not only the poet, but the scientist as well was aroused in him by this fairy garden. The manifold plant forms reminded him of his theory of the *Urpflanze*, which he had worked at continuously in Italy. Might not this original type, from which all the different species of plants have sprung, be discovered among the multitudinous varieties? That there must be such a plant he had no doubt. How else could we recognise, he reasons, that this or that object is a plant? His supersensible *Urpflanze*, however, could not be discovered in any sensible form; but his investigations strengthened him in his conviction of the correctness and fertility of the idea. The mineralogist in him vied with the botanist in making the most of his sojourn in Palermo. He prosecuted his studies diligently in the gravel of brooks, in the stone quarries, and in the workshops of stone polishers, adding greatly to his store of knowledge and to his collections of specimens. His artistic sense, on the other hand, found little to occupy it. Of antique art there was little in the region, and still less was accessible to tourists. He cared nothing whatever for Arabian-Norman art, peculiar and tasteful as it appears in the Capella Palatina and in the Monreale Cathedral. He declared that the people of modern Palermo had no taste whatever, and in the irrational design and ornamentation of the Villa Palagonia * he saw the general lack of taste most strikingly exemplified.

The scarcity of *objets d'art* did not detract from his enjoyment of Palermo. Nature offered enough to satisfy the poet, painter, and investigator; in addition he found most agreeable entertainment in the people, from the viceroy down to the adventurer Cagliostro's poor but pious family,

* For interesting details concerning this most fantastic abode of a most whimsical prince cf. *H.*, xxiv., 766 *ff.*—C.

whom he visited at first from curiosity, but later out of a genuine interest, which prompted him to lend them assistance. When he took leave of the city and its wonderful garden he declared that probably in all his life he had not been as serenely happy for sixteen days consecutively as he had been there.

He left the city on the 18th of April in company with his friend Kniep. The travellers first went to Segesta to see a temple and an ancient theatre, and then rode three days through sparsely inhabited regions, the geological and agricultural conditions of which occupied Goethe's attention, and arrived in Girgenti on the southern coast. The beautiful situation and the ruins of the ancient Greek city occasioned a stay of several days. To Goethe's mind the so-called temple of Concordia, with its pleasing lines, was related to the temples of Pæstum as the figure of a god to that of a giant. But when he returned to Pæstum after his Sicilian journey he recognised that the temple of Poseidon ranked far above all those of Sicily.

The travellers had originally intended to go from Girgenti to Syracuse. But as Goethe wished to become acquainted with Sicily as the granary of Rome, and had found out that the real grain-fields extended over the interior of the island, he gave up Syracuse and traversed the island in the direction of Catania. His desire was more than satisfied. For four days the wheat-fields and barley-fields stretched on in uniform fruitfulness, and the dreamy composition of his *Nausikaa* was the only thing that was able to make the poet oblivious to the discomforts of the tedious ride, the bad roads, and the still worse quarters. On the 2nd of May they arrived in Catania. Long before they reached their destination the snow-capped peak of Mt. Ætna had beckoned to them through the clouds and inspired Goethe with a yearning desire to ascend it. But, heeding the earnest warnings of the natives that the season was not favourable, they contented themselves for the time being with ascending as far as Monte Rosso, a secondary crater of Ætna, where they encountered such a violent

storm that Kniep remained below the summit and Goethe was in danger of being blown down the mountain-side. Further climbing was not to be thought of. From Catania they followed the coast northward. They were enthusiastic over Taormina, but were horrified at the sight of Messina, which had been so terribly devastated by an earthquake four years before. Because of the deserted appearance of the city, with its population for the most part still living in wooden booths outside the gates, they decided to enter as soon as possible upon the return journey to Naples.

On the entire Sicilian journey Goethe had opened up his soul almost exclusively to the influences of Nature. She had aroused him to manifold observations, scarcely indicated here, which gave him a clear picture of the island for his permanent possession. To be sure, it was only a picture of the Sicily of that day. He obstinately refused to supplement it on the historical side, much as he may have been tempted to do so by the varied and peculiarly fantastic history of the island. How differently the poet of the *Braut von Messina* and the *Bürgschaft* would have acted! Here, again, we observe one of Goethe's noteworthy peculiarities. In Rome he felt the need of enlivening the ruins by means of history; here he felt the need of holding the ghosts of the past at a distance from the blooming fields. When, in a beautiful valley near Palermo, the guide was about to tell him of the battles that had there been fought between the Romans and the Carthaginians, he was vexed, and interrupted him, saying: "It is bad enough that from time to time the grain has been trampled down, if not always by elephants, at any rate by horses and men; one should at least refrain from frightening the imagination out of its peaceful dream by such echoes of past turmoil." Goethe was a master of the art of enjoying, or, more correctly, of the art of admitting harmonies into his own soul, that he might give them back to the world in a more enjoyable form.

The homeward voyage proved to be more disagreeable than the outward passage had been. The wind was bad,

the ship uncomfortable, overfilled with passengers, and in the charge of a captain and mate in whose technical knowledge the natives had no confidence. On the evening of the third day they were between Capri and Cape Minerva.* The wind had become completely still. The commotion among the passengers was all the more violent. They thought that the ship, through the awkwardness of the captain, had drifted into a current that flows around Capri, and was in danger of being stranded on the rocks of the island. The nearer the danger the greater the excitement. Everybody was up on the deck and clamouring at the captain, who seemed still to be thinking of some way to save the vessel. In this predicament Goethe was no longer able to remain passive. He recognised that the clamouring was more dangerous than the rocks, because it confused the crew. He laid this before the passengers with great emphasis, and, with his gift of striking at the proper moment the right tone for everybody, he admonished the credulous South Italians: "Direct your fervent prayers to the Mother of God, upon whom alone everything depends, and implore her to interpose with her Son, that he may do for you what he did in the olden days for his apostles, when the waves of the stormy Sea of Galilee were beginning to dash into the boat. The Lord was asleep, but when the despairing, helpless ones aroused him, he immediately commanded the wind to be still, just as he now can command the air to stir, if it be his holy will." Goethe's intervention, a scene worthy to be immortalised by the brush of an artist, produced a most desirable effect. The people calmed down and prayed. At length a gentle breeze actually arose and drove the ship out of the dangerous current. On the morning of the fourth day (May 14th) the vessel landed in Naples.

Here Goethe again passed three beautiful weeks. After the loneliness of Sicily the gay, half-Oriental swarm of people in the great city of approximately 400,000 souls took

* Cape Minerva, the south-east point of the Gulf of Naples, is now called Punta della Campanella. Cf. *H.*, xxiv., 214.—C.

on a new interest for him. The chattering, bargaining, pleasure-loving, ragged, apparently idle, but really busy people, who day-in and day-out loll about in throngs in the narrow streets, he studied in the many varied phases of their life with as much care as he bestowed upon the investigation of plants and rocks. The vivid descriptions, the fine observations which resulted from these studies are well known. He judges of the life of the city as a whole more as a poet and a painter than as an economist and a statesman, when he says: "It is a glorious sight, but one must not apply to it the police standards of northern morality." Just as he now devotes himself to the multitude more than during his previous sojourn, so does he also to individuals. He enters upon an extensive round of social functions, including receptions in the royal palace, and it is these pleasures which make him loth to part from the city. But time presses. He plans to be on the other side of the Alps at the end of August, and meanwhile to spend another month in Rome, and see Florence, Parma, and Milan on the homeward way. On the 3rd of June, after a touching farewell from his good friend Kniep, he leaves Naples; on the 6th he is again in Rome.

His fixed purpose to enter upon the return journey in July melted away the moment he again entered the world-metropolis. In July he postponed his departure to the end of August, and in August to the following Easter. Life in Rome assumed for him a sweeter aspect than ever before. "How shall I leave the only place in all the world which can become a paradise for me?" "I find here the fulfilment of all my desires and dreams. Every day my health of body and soul seems to improve, and soon I shall have nothing to desire but the continuation of my condition." Thus he writes in July to his friend, the composer Kayser. The fulfilment of all his desires and dreams meant more now than the mere seeing of the works of art and the places which since his early youth had had such an attraction for him; it meant the living as an artist and a poet in the midst of this magnificent environment. He had broadened his program to include these factors. His intention was to

make use of the ten months of his second sojourn in Rome to train his little "talentlet for drawing" and to complete the literary works already begun and those projected, namely: *Egmont*, *Tasso*, and *Faust*.

His artistic education, which had occupied his thought during the whole of his previous life, he now took up with extraordinary seriousness and thoroughness, and many of his confessions show clearly that it was not his sole aim to attain to a higher degree of skill as a dilettante, and thus to a greater enjoyment of painting, but that his desire to be a creative artist, combined with his unusual talent for seeing everything real as a picture, and the encouraging praise of his friends in Rome, induced him to attempt to make of himself a painter as well as a poet.

So he began with the study of architecture and perspective, and the composition and colouring of landscape, then drew landscapes from nature, passing finally to the human figure, which he sought to master in all its parts by means of drawing, supplemented to some extent by modelling. He carried on these studies with enthusiastic zeal, having Heinrich Meyer as his most valued guide. As a dilettante he made excellent progress. From the laboured drawing of characteristic outlines he rose to careful execution of details and plastic composition. But the fervent prayer which he had raised to Heaven in his early years,

O, daß die innre Schöpfungskraft
Durch meinen Sinn erschölle!
Daß eine Bildung voller Saft
Aus meinen Fingern quölle! *

was even now unanswered. He was confronted with the conviction that the most perfect appreciation of art is not equivalent to creative genius. This, however, had its good side. After years of torturing doubt he had arrived at the peaceful assurance that he was not born a painter.

* O would creative fancy thrill
My senses through and through!
Inspire my hand to paint with skill
Life's picture full and true!

His diligent measuring, drawing, and modelling had the further advantage that he learned better than ever before to see works of art. Indeed it seemed to him as if he were only now beginning thoroughly to see and enjoy the highest in art, such as antique sculpture. If his enthusiasm for the antique was at all capable of further development, it grew during his second sojourn in Rome, especially after he had seen drawings of the Parthenon sculptures. "If one were to see the masterpieces of the ancient artists," he remarks in a letter written at this time, "one would have nothing to desire but rightly to know them, and depart in peace." "These great works of art are at the same time the highest works of nature, produced by man in accordance with true and natural laws; everything capricious and imaginary falls to the ground; here is necessity, here is God."

Aside from antique art, it is at first especially the pictures of Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel which inspire him to new admiration and deep study; and he still ranks the Titanic Florentine above Raphael. Not until the end of his sojourn is a change noticeable. Raphael begins to gain on Michael Angelo, and we begin to have a presentiment that the time is approaching when Goethe will put, not only the daring grandeur of Michael Angelo, but, as in former days, the quiet greatness of Raphael on an equality with the antique.

As if to fill up a gap and complete the circle of the arts about our poet in Rome, music began to engage his attention more prominently than hitherto. His old boyhood acquaintance, Kayser, who had been several years composing the music to his operetta *Scherz, List und Rache*, finished it in the autumn of 1787, and Goethe now had several new tasks for him. He was to help recast the older operettas, *Claudine von Villa Bella* and *Erwin und Elmire*, and compose the music to *Egmont*, and to a genuine opera buffa, which Goethe had planned to base on the famous "diamond necklace" intrigue.

Kayser arrived in Rome at the end of October and became the fourth member of the household of artists on the

Corso incontro Rondanini. Here not only was his own music to Goethe's works discussed and rehearsed, but all the music heard in theatres or churches, or discovered by him in libraries, received due attention; and from the merry artists' lodge pious old church melodies not infrequently rang out into the street. In this roundabout way Goethe acquired some taste for the theatre, and even more for the great church ceremonies, which he had hitherto been unable to enjoy because he had too little of the feeling of a child and of a sensuous man to take any delight in the beautiful illusion.

If, in addition to these manifold art studies, one takes into account the great amount of literary work which Goethe imposed upon himself, and the botanical investigations which he passionately pursued, and for which he everywhere collected material, one is willing to believe him when he says that he hardly ever spent his time in more painstaking work than during this second sojourn in Rome. If he hoped to accomplish, even approximately, all the tasks which he had set for himself, he had to follow the practice of his first sojourn, and keep away from the world and the society of women. In the former he succeeded wholly, in the latter only partly. In Naples and Sicily he had undergone a change. His heart refused longer to be satisfied with friendly letters and loving intercourse at a distance, and wanton, wayward Cupid found him a more willing victim. On an autumn sojourn in the country, in Castel Gandolfo, while Goethe was drawing landscapes from nature, Maddalena Riggi,[81] a beautiful Milanese, captivated him unawares with her blue eyes and graceful manner. But she was betrothed. He remembered his serious principles, and was not disposed to play the Wetzlar rôle a second time. A protracted illness deprived him of her society for a time. After her recovery he met her again at the carnival in Rome and thought her more beautiful than ever. Her engagement had meanwhile been broken, and Goethe, seeing that she returned his affection, was almost tempted to allow his relation to her to assume a more serious

aspect. But his better judgment conquered the increased temptation and prevented his carrying the Nausikaa tragedy from the realm of fancy into that of reality. Only in the moment of parting did his lips and hers disclose their secrets, and the words which fell were so tender and sincere that Goethe, after forty years had intervened, was still unwilling to desecrate them by repeating them to others.

While the graceful Maddalena had touched the finer chords of his emotional nature, Faustina, with whom he associated during his last months in Rome, appealed to his coarser instincts. Her poetic glorification is to be found in the *Römische Elegien.*[82]

The combined effect of climate, poetry, music, art, antiquities, freedom, sociability, and love raised Goethe to a culmination of happiness [83] from which he henceforth proposed to measure the fortunes of his life.

At this height his sojourn in Rome ended.

Easter (1788) was approaching, the time for his departure from the dear city. "In every great separation there lies a germ of madness. One must take care not to brood over it and cherish it." In these few words Goethe has well characterised his all-absorbing mood during these days. His departure from Rome was inaugurated with solemnity. During his last nights in the city the full moon shone out of a clear sky. He felt drawn once more to approach the great monuments of antiquity which had by moonlight so often filled him with exalted emotion. He wended his way to the Capitol, the Forum, and the Colosseum, and the sorrowful lamentations of Ovid, who was banished from Rome on a moonlight night, were a true expression of his feelings:

Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago,
Qua mihi supremum tempus in urbe fuit,
Cum repeto noctem, qua tot mihi cara reliqui,
Labitur ex oculis nunc quoque gutta meis.*

* When before me arises that saddest of scenes, the evening,
Which of my life was the last spent in the city of Rome,
When I recall that night and the many dear things left behind me,
Even though years intervene, still come the tears to my eyes.

On the 23rd of April the poet drove out through the same Porto del Popolo through which, eighteen months before, he had so joyfully entered. He was not the sole mourner; the whole circle of friends [84] in Rome, to whom he had gradually become a friend, brother, leader, prophet, demigod, mingled their sorrow with his. Nothing could be more touching or more glorifying for the departing one than the lamentations which followed him on his way. Young Bury, his house-companion, was dissolved in tears; Meyer wrote dolefully: "The best fortune of my life is lost." Verschaffelt, his teacher in perspective: "Every day I feel the loss of your presence here. . . . The day of your departure was to me unbearable, I was not good for anything"; Moritz longs to see the eye, "which has so often perceived and harmonised all the beauties that I see about me here"; and noble Angelika: "Your departure from us completely absorbed my heart and soul. . . . The 23rd of last month, the fatal day, threw me into a state of sadness from which I cannot recover. . . . Councillor Reiffenstein and Abbate Spina both love you, but how can they help it? . . . A few days ago I went with Zucchi to your house. I felt as if I were in a holy place."

On the return journey Goethe made his first long stay in Florence, where he had made but a flying visit on his journey southward. He thoroughly enjoyed the rich art treasures of the Tuscan capital, and again it was an antique statue, the Medicean Venus, which triumphed victoriously over all others. He spent a great part of his time in the pleasure gardens and ornamental parks of the city, working at *Tasso*, which was especially near to his heart at this time because in it he could give poetic expression to his own sorrow while depicting that of "a passionate soul irresistibly drawn to an irrevocable banishment." From Florence he went to Parma, where he enjoyed the Correggios, and thence to Milan. The Cathedral of Milan aroused his old antipathy for Gothic art, whereas Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* gave him the highest pleasure. The sight of the Alps reminded him that he would now soon leave Italy

behind. If he was to draw no further enjoyment from the chiselled products of stone he would at least seek comfort in the raw material. So he bought himself a hammer with which to break the rocks and drive away the bitterness of death.

From Milan he probably went by way of Lago Maggiore, whose shore he made the home of Mignon, and over the Splügen Pass to Lake Constance. In Constance he was awaited by his Zurich friend, Barbara Schulthess, who clung to him with sentimental devotion. He spent several days with her and then continued his journey via Augsburg and Nuremberg. Late in the evening of the 18th of June, Goethe, accompanied by Kayser, whom he had brought along from Rome, returned once more to the quiet little country town on the Ilm, after an absence of almost two years.

No one event in Goethe's life was a greater determining factor than his Italian journey. It made him a new man, ridding him of all nervousness and disease. Melancholy expectation of an early death, which seemed preferable to a continuation of the life he had been leading, gave way to an admirable cheerfulness and enjoyment of life. The deeply serious, silent man whose grave thoughts never left him, even in society, had become as merry as a child. It is refreshing to hear him laugh in the popular theatres of Venice and Naples, refreshing to see with what delight he eats his figs on Lago di Garda, or his grapes in the market-place of Vicenza. All his senses have been aroused to new life. With the same degree of sensuous pleasure with which he eats the fruits of the southland, he listens to the soft melodies of the night, gazes on the splendour of the clear sky, basks in the soft winds, feasts his eyes on the endless wealth of form and colour which nature and art have lavished upon the Italian landscape, and revels in the charms of the happiness of love. He again manifests a fondness for all that is natural and human. Aristocratic society he avoids, and the common people, with whom he had come into touch in Weimar only as a ruler and a benefactor, he seeks out and approaches on terms of equality.

Every beggar is his friend. And whereas in Weimar he had permitted only Frau von Stein and Herder to invade his domestic solitude, in Rome he lives as a student with young artists and authors, associates with them in the streets and public squares, in museums and wine-rooms, and shares with them his lodgings and his table.

Here in Rome he was able to round out his life and expand. His world-spirit found for the first time in the world-capital a congenial atmosphere and environment. Here, where the whole world, past and present, crowded in upon him, he discovered what a world-wide grasp his spirit was capable of, and what a joy it was to be incited to expand to the utmost. "I have long wished for such an element, that I, too, might swim and not always wade" (November 24, 1786). "I feel the healthfulness of my nature and how it is growing; my feet get sore only when in tight shoes; and I see nothing when I am placed before a wall" (Christmas, 1787).

Inasmuch as Goethe was entirely at liberty in Italy, and lived absolutely according to his own will and desires, he could not ascribe to others or to circumstances anything that disturbed him. He was obliged to look into his own heart, and so had occasion to become thoroughly acquainted with himself, and where meditation failed to lead to a knowledge of himself, he was guided by his failures, as in the case of painting. The time passed away when he "buried himself in quiet contemplation of his ego in order to spy out the gloomy ways of his dissatisfied spirit." He arrived at a clear understanding of himself and the ways he must pursue: above all else he recognised that his peculiar, first, and most important calling was not that of a statesman, nor of a painter or scientist, but that of a poet; and this clear understanding led to harmony of character, resoluteness, and happiness. To use one of his own words he became "complete" (*ganz*)[85] and sufficient unto himself. He no longer needed others, as heretofore, to supplement his powers, nor as guides and confessors for periods of darkness and confusion.

What he gained as a man he gained as a poet. With his enjoyment of life he recovered also his power of poetic creation. Scarcely was he relieved of the pressure of business and vexation when the fountains of his poetic nature burst forth pure and abundant. In the midst of the engrossing claims of art, nature, and life he completed *Iphigenie* and *Egmont*, entirely recast *Erwin* and *Claudine*, made considerable progress with *Tasso* in its new form, and, what is the most convincing evidence of the youthful freshness of his poetic talent, not only took up *Faust* again, which he had not touched for twelve years, but even boasted he would finish the gigantic work in Rome. At the same time his mind was occupied with the development of former great plans, such as *Der ewige Jude*, and the outlining of new great ones, such as *Iphigenie in Delphi* and *Nausikaa*, or smaller ones, such as the opera buffa which he later recast as *Der Gross-Cophta*.

As his poetic fertility reminds us of his youth, so also does his poetic manner. He had been in a fair way to become seraphic. Through the asceticism and martyrdom of his last years in Weimar he had become more and more highly spiritualised. Poems such as *Iphigenie*, *Tasso*, *die Geheimnisse*, or the projected novel, *Über das Weltall*, give an approximate idea of the trend of his poetry, and, but for Italy, this trend would have been followed with increasing one-sidedness. *Wilhelm Meister* should not be cited to prove the contrary; for, in the first place, its beginnings go back to Frankfort, and, secondly, we do not know what it was like in the earlier redaction. Furthermore, even in the later redaction, the asceticism from which Wilhelm suffers for years is characteristic of the first Weimar period. There are probably many who regret that Goethe did not keep to those ethereal, spiritual, and supersensuous paths, but the majority will agree with us in considering it a distinct gain that the poet under Italian influences was again made capable of running the gamut of the whole human microcosm, from the most exalted heights to the lowest depths, and of showing both the spiritual and the sensuous in all possible

phases, as well as combined in beautiful harmony. Only by thus representing mankind in its totality did he accomplish his high calling of comprehending man in every fibre of his being and bringing him under the ennobling discipline of poetry, especially of his own poetry.

Goethe has himself depicted in a very suggestive manner his renunciation of the delicate pallor of his Weimar spirituality and his return to the glowing, richly coloured realism of his youth under the influences of sunny Italy. In the thirteenth *Römische Elegie* Amor approaches him, saying:

Nun du mir läſſiger dienſt, wo ſind die ſchönen Geſtalten,
Wo die Farben, der Glanz deiner Erfindungen hin?
Denkſt du nun wieder zu bilden, o Freund? Die Schule der Griechen
Blieb noch offen, das Tor ſchloſſen die Jahre nicht zu.
War das Antike doch neu, da jene Glücklichen lebten!
Lebe glücklich, und ſo lebe die Vorzeit in dir!*

Returning to the warm, realistic, richly coloured manner of his youth Goethe at the same time rose to a greater height. His style became surer, grander, and clearer; indeed he now for the first time became a master of what an essay of his Italian period calls "style." This was due partly to his observation and study of the antique, and partly to his own diligent efforts to become an artist. The first general uplifting influence he felt was the antique: "The revolution which I foresaw, and which is now taking place within me, is the same that has been experienced by every artist who after a long, faithful endeavour to be true to nature has seen the relics of the great spirit of antiquity; his soul has welled up and he has felt himself inwardly transfigured, and this has given him a consciousness of freer life, higher existence, ease, and grace." The study of

* Since thou more idly hast served me, whither are gone the fair figures,
Whither the colours, the light, filling thy canvas of yore?
Think'st thou again to create, O friend? The school of the Grecians
Still remains open, its doors passing of years cannot close.
New was, in sooth, the antique while those so happy were living;
Happy live thou, and so in thee bygone ages shall live.

works of art, and his own artistic efforts, bring him, further, to the conditions upon which the great effects of the highest creations of art rest. The artists of antiquity, and the few of later times who deserve to be placed in the same class with them, stripped their subjects of everything accidental and capricious, and portrayed their essence, so far as it is possible for us to represent the essence of things, in visible and tangible forms. That is to say, they sought out and portrayed the typical, and in this way rose from naturalism and mannerism to style. From now on this is Goethe's own highest aim. The mere imitation of nature, even of "beautiful" nature (Batteux's favourite recipe), he casts aside, and holds to the typical, which in every case is beautiful and at the same time great, because it is true.

Nachahmung der Natur—
Der ſchönen—
Ich ging auch wohl auf dieſer Spur;
Gewöhnen
Mocht' ich wohl nach und nach den Sinn,
Mich zu vergnügen;
Allein ſo bald ich mündig bin:
Es ſind's die Griechen.*

Observation of the most brilliant revelations of art, and practice in art, finally developed to full mastery his innate power of plastic word-painting. As the plasticity of the figures and landscapes of his early writings surpasses all previous achievements in German literature, he now mounts one step higher in this art. All that is necessary to convince one of the truthfulness of this statement is to compare the figures and landscapes in *Werther* with those in *Hermann und Dorothea*, or the descriptions in the *Briefe aus*

* Go, Nature reproduce—
Her beauty—
In youth 't was verily my use;
And duty
Faithfully done, I reached a stage
That satisfied me;
But scarcely am I come of age,
The Grecians guide me.

*der Schweiz* with those in the *Italienische Reise*, beginning with the journey to Naples. Whereas the outlines of the figures were formerly more or less hazy and indefinite, they now are characterised by the greatest firmness and definiteness; and whereas formerly the chief element in his landscapes was the feeling, now he gives us the landscape itself, without sacrificing any of this sentiment. This fact is not affected by the exceptions in which the poet, influenced by a particular theory or struggling with a refractory idea, or yielding to the impatience of old age, contented himself with suggestive silver-pencil drawing. Whenever inner and outer conditions favoured his compositions, he has, even to the last years of his life, shown us in perfect masterpieces what he learned in Italy.

"The chief aim of my journey was to cure myself of the evils, both physical and moral in nature, which annoyed me in Germany, and to satisfy my burning thirst for true art," wrote Goethe to the Duke on the 25th of January, 1788. He had accomplished both purposes; the second in a broader sense than he realised. He not only saw the true art for which he thirsted,—he mastered it. Against the return of the physico-moral evils he was strongly fortified, most of all by his clear understanding of himself. With enviable assurance he now pursued his manner of life, which to most people is a mystery. He became the reposeful Olympian, whom posterity admires, while many of his contemporaries missed in him the devoted, communicative friend of former years.

# NOTES

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*W.*—The Weimar edition of Goethe's *Werke, erste Abteilung*, containing his poetical, biographical, and esthetical writings.

*Tb.*—The Weimar edition of Goethe's *Werke, dritte Abteilung*, containing his diaries.

*Br.*—*Vierte Abteilung*, containing his letters.

*H.*—The Hempel edition of Goethe's *Werke*.

*DW.*—*Dichtung und Wahrheit.*

*Ber. d. FDH.*—*Berichte des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts.* *N. F.*—*Neue Folge* (New Series).

*GJ.*—*Goethejahrbuch.*

*Vjschr.*—*Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturgeschichte.*

G. u. Sch. Arch.—Goethe- und Schillerarchiv in Weimar.

1. The seeming contradictoriness in his personality was reflected in turn in the contradictions in his writings. This was pointed out with a terseness and insight, which greatly pleased the poet, by J. J. Ampère in a review of Goethe's dramas in the Paris *Globe* in 1826 (reprinted in J. J Ampère, *Littérature et Voyages, Allemagne et Scandinavie*, Paris, 1833, pp. 255–275). Goethe considered the review important enough to translate almost the whole of it into German and print it in *Kunst und Altertum*, v., 3 and vi., 1.

2. Goethe's Germanic nature is more apparent to foreigners than to his fellow-countrymen. Madame de Staël found in him "les traits principaux du génie allemand" (*De l'Allemagne*, i., 240, second ed.). Emerson in his *Representative Men* calls him "the head and body of the German nation."

3. *Cf.* Sulp. Boisserée, i., 267. Boisserée makes the further record, based on Goethe's utterances in 1815: "Goethe's wrath over perversities; how he used to give vent to it by smashing pictures on the corner of his table, by shooting books to shreds, etc., and then he could not help exclaiming: 'It shall not arise!' and so he had to do something to cool down his wrath." A well-known example was his nailing up of Jacobi's *Woldemar* in the park at Ettersburg. The following utterances will illustrate the violence of Goethe's fits of passion. Lavater writes to Zimmermann, March 16, 1775: "I hear Goethe stamp his foot and exclaim: 'They are dogs!'" Aug. 27, 1774: "Goethe is a most terrible

and most amiable man" (*Im neuen Reich*, 1878, ii., 605*f.*). Goethe's mother, April 11, 1779: "Doctor Wolf . . . in accordance with his laudable habit, would gnash his teeth and curse in a most godless fashion." What a volcanic fire of wrath was smouldering in Goethe's bosom, even in his old age, may be seen from the following testimony of the younger Voss: "After Schiller's death I had a scene with Goethe which I shall never forget. . . . He had learned through Riemer that my father was going to Heidelberg. He began to speak with such violence that I was speechless from fright. 'The loss of Schiller,' he said among other things, and this with a voice of thunder, 'I had to endure; for it was brought upon me by fate; but the responsibility for the removal to Heidelberg cannot be laid to the charge of fate; it is the work of man'" (*Briefe von Heinrich Voss*, hrsg. von Abr. Voss, ii., 64). "He began to storm and curse about Luther's accursed imagining of the devil" (Heinr. Voss to Solger, Feb. 24, 1804, *Arch. f. Literaturg.*, xi., 118). The number of such evidences might easily be increased. That such occasional outbursts of wrath brought relief from distress that was still deeper seated is shown by his words to Knebel in Dec., 1774 (*Cf.* p. 215).

4. "Finally [on the way from Erfurt to Gotha] I again worked out my favourite scene in *Wilhelm Meister*. In my fancy I went over all the details, and at last I began to weep so bitterly that it was well I arrived in Gotha on time" (*Br.*, June 5, 1780). "This morning while driving over from Cento, half asleep and half awake, I had the good fortune to invent a definite plot for *Iphigenie auf Delphos*. There is to be a fifth act and a recognition scene, such as very few can be found to equal. I myself wept over it like a child" (Oct. 18, 1786. *Tb.*, i., 304).

5. This also explains the remarkable judgment of him expressed in 1787 by his clever servant and secretary, Philipp Seidel: "His journey to Rome will in all probability mark a new epoch in his life. It seems to me as if he were one of those people whom fate did not wish to bring up in a hothouse. Perhaps it was necessary for his character and his talents to mature so slowly in order that he might be made happy" (*Ber. d. FDH., N. F.*, vii., 449). It was with this in mind that Herder now and then called him a "big child." The following characteristic confession is only one of many: "Thus with my thousand thoughts I am again reduced to a child, unacquainted with the present, in the dark as to myself" (*Br.*, Oct. 10, 1780).

6. Goethe himself often made use of the word "Vaterland" during the first half of his life. *Cf.* the letters of July 16, 1776; Dec., 1781 (*Br.* v., 246, 1); April 10, 1782; Oct. 28, 1784. *Cf.* "the dust of the fatherland" p. 370. On the other hand he uses the word "Vaterstadt" in the letters of Aug. 18 and Sept. 10, 1792 (x., 16), etc. We observe that the change of words occurs after the Italian journey. It is evident that while he was in Italy the whole of Germany became his "Vaterland," by the side of which Frankfort could no longer be anything more than his "Vaterstadt."

7. W. Stricker, *Goethe und Frankfurt a. M.*, p. 11 *f.*, says: "About 30,000 Christian inhabitants in 3000 houses." "The number of Jews hardly more than a tenth of the Christian population." Büsching (*Neue*

*Erdbeschreibung*, 6. *Aufl.*), gives, for the year 1778, 36,000 Christians and 6600 Jews.

8. The nobility, the doctors, aristocratic merchants, and capitalists occupied the first two benches in the council (28 seats), nine privileged guilds the third bench (14). *Cf.* A. A. v. Lersner, *Der weitberühmten freien Reichs-, Wahl- und Handelsstadt Chronika* i., 257.

9. I have mentioned only Leipsic as a university at which Goethe's father studied, although there is documentary evidence that he was first matriculated as a student at the University of Giessen for a year. But it seems that this year was lost by illness or some other cause. Apparently he never mentioned his having attended the University of Giessen, otherwise his son would not have mentioned Leipsic only in *DW.* (xxvi., 44). But his friends also completely ignore Giessen, *e. g.*, J. C. Schneider, in congratulating him on obtaining the doctor's degree (*Ber. d. FDH., N. F.*, x., 72). Likewise Senckenberg, in his epistle of congratulation attached to the dissertation of the elder Goethe, speaks only casually of "Lipsiæ et alibi," although the receiving of the degree in Giessen and his own five years of study at that university (Kriegk, *Senckenberg*, p. 15) would have been occasion enough for him to make special mention of Giessen. That Councillor Goethe studied in Leipsic for four years has been definitely established by the publication of Schneider's congratulations. Whether on his journeys, in addition to Italy and France, he also visited Holland, as is usually stated, is very doubtful. He had some intention of doing so, but as his son only mentions Italy and France this intention does not seem to have been carried out. On his return from France his thirst for knowledge prompted him to stop in Strasburg and hear some lectures at the university. He matriculated on the 25th of Jan., 1741, as Froitzheim has shown (*Strassb. Post*, June 23, 1895). This fact helps to explain why he chose Strasburg as the second university for Wolfgang.

10. According to Heyden (*Mitteilungen des Vereins f. Gesch. und Altertumsk. in Frankfurt a. M.*, i., 186) Goethe's father would have been excluded from the council by the fact that his step-brother, Herm. Jacob Goethe, had been a member of that body since the 8th of May, 1747. For the imperial resolution of Nov. 22, 1725, fixed as a qualification of a candidate for election: "that neither his father, son, brother, nephew, father-in-law, son-in-law, consocer, wife's brother, nor sister's husband be already in the council." But there is a question, whether the authorities did not put a liberal interpretation on this stipulation and under certain circumstances admit a step-brother. For many arbitrary interpretations of the law were customary in the free imperial city. To be sure, this does not settle the question as to whether or not the son may have imputed a false motive to his father. We may assume, however, that Goethe did not make his statements arbitrarily, but based them on what he was told in the family circle. In any case they are instructive in that they throw light upon the opinion which the family held of Councillor Goethe and his marriage.

11. There had always been a good many things in favour of the credibility of Bettina's stories told in the words of Goethe's mother, but the establishment of the fact that Goethe intended to insert them in *DW.*

to illustrate his mother's characteristics has stamped them as altogether trustworthy. *Cf. W.* xxix., 231.

12. Bower's *History of the Popes*, the work of an English Jesuit who had been converted to the evangelical faith, was translated into German and published in eleven quarto volumes, of which four had appeared in 1756, the fifth in 1762. Even if the father made them study through only the first four volumes, nevertheless that was making no slight demand upon the sprightly wife and children.

13. What was the colour of Goethe's eyes? In the above quotation Bettina, who knew him very well, makes his mother speak of his black eyes; Wieland (*Merkur*, 1776, i., 15), also gives him black eyes; likewise Superintendent of Mines Trebra (*GJ.*, ix., 14), Gleim (Falk, *Goethe aus näherem persönlichen Umgang.*, 2. *Aufl.*, p. 139), Landolt (*GJ.*, xiii, 131), and many others. And this has become almost the universal opinion. But as a matter of fact they were brown, as is shown, not only by some good observers, but above all by the oil paintings. However, his pupils were of such extraordinary size (the physicist von Münchow characterised them as "almost without parallel"—*cf.* Viehoff, *Goethes Leben*, 4. *Aufl.*, i., 23), and such beaming splendour that the narrow brown iris was lost sight of, and the impression was left upon the observer that his eyes were black. In such cases we are accustomed to speak of black eyes, even though a black iris does not exist. I have followed this well-founded usage.

14. In a picture accompanying the chapter on "God's Providence" in the *Orbis Pictus* Goethe could see a man who is addressed by an angel on the left, while on the right the devil seeks to throw a noose around his neck. A little farther to the side stands a magician in the centre of a circle. As the artist probably had Faust in mind, young Goethe may also have thought of the popular magician.

15. Gottfried's *Chronicles* were published by Hunter in Frankfort in a fifth edition, revised down to the year 1750. The three folio volumes were illustrated with a large number of etchings. Goethe, who was later a collaborator on Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, may have read in the introduction to Gottfried's work: "Everybody desires to know how the figure and face of the character of whom he reads may have appeared, especially as those experienced in physiognomy affirm that nature has made manifest the inward inclinations of the heart to virtue or vice by means of certain lineaments and expressions of the countenance."

16. We now possess an excellent monograph on the royal lieutenant by Dr. Martin Schubart (*François de Théas, Comte de Thoranc*, Munich, 1896), which gives new evidence of the strength of Goethe's memory and of the clearness of the impressions which he formed, even when a boy. Schubart has not only most carefully investigated the personal relations of the royal lieutenant—especially during the Seven Years' War—but he has discovered in southern France the very pictures painted for him. A small number of them are still in Grasse, the most of them in the Castle of Mouan near Grasse, in the possession of the grand-nephew of the royal lieutenant, Count Sartoux, where Herr von Loeper, owing to a peculiar dimness of vision, had sought for them in vain in 1874. Schubart pur-

chased the Joseph-cycle from Count Sartoux and most generously presented them to the Freie Deutsche Hochstift to be placed in the Goethehaus in Frankfort, where they may now be seen. Beside these some other paintings belonging to Count Sartoux were exhibited in 1895, and they also corresponded exactly to Goethe's account of the works of the Frankfort and Darmstadt artists. For further details see the carefully prepared catalogue by Dr. O. Heuer. There are excellent reproductions of the Joseph pictures (probably the head of young Goethe in one of them) in Schubart's volume; also a fine copy of a portrait of the royal lieutenant in the Castle of Mouan.

17. It is highly probable that the young Frenchman's name was de Rosne. In a letter from Leipsic (*Br.*, i., 26) to his sister Goethe mentions a Frankfort actress by the name of Madame de Rosne. In a preliminary outline of the passage in question in *DW.* we read, however; "Madame Derones, Tochter, Sohn." Even before the Leipsic letters to his sister had been published Düntzer (*Erläuterungen*, i., 119) had made the conjecture that we should read de Rosne (Derosne) in *DW.* instead of Derones.

18. That the youth had no liking for Plato either was doubtless partly the fault of the insipid and confused treatment of the profound poetical philosopher in the "*little Brucker*," which Goethe's tutor made the basis of his instruction in philosophy. "For the last few days I have been reading Plato, for the first time, as it seems, taking up his *Symposium*, *Phædrus*, and the *Apology*," writes Goethe on the 1st of Feb., 1793.

19. Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* is an encyclopedia devoted almost exclusively to biography, and gradually grew from two large folio volumes in the first edition (1697) to four in the later editions. Goethe might well call it a labyrinth. It contains an enormous amount of learning, is clever, humorous, piquant, and verbose. Through two generations it exerted a very important influence on the educated minds of Europe.

20. Morhof's *Polyhistor Literarius, Philosophicus, Practicus*, a popular handbook which first appeared in 1688, contained a vast amount of bibliographical material, a history of most of the sciences, a methodology, rhetoric, poetics, and a systematic, though short, treatment of physics, astronomy, chemistry, botany, and zoölogy.

21. Gesner's *Primæ Lineæ Isagoges in Eruditionem Universalem* (Göttingen, 1756), gave an introduction to philology (embracing also a treatment of the arts), history, and philosophy. In the philosophical part Spinoza is not mentioned. In the chapter, "De Poesi speciatim," the young poet was taught, "Homœoteleutœn studium mater sit cogitationum et visorum, improvisa quadam novitate, et non semper petita ex proximo placentium, non autem ingeniorum tortura et corruptrix verborum."

22. Among Goethe's earliest poems might also be counted the congratulatory verses dedicated to his grandparents at New Year's, 1757, if we were as convinced of their independent authorship, as we are in the case of the colloquies. At any rate they may interest our readers as the first poems which bear Goethe's name, and as they have hitherto been

included only in the Weimar edition (vol. xxxvii.), we will print them here. The originals are in the G. u. Sch. Archiv:

I

Erhabner Grosspapa! Ein neues Jahr erscheint,
Drum muss ich meine Pflicht und Schuldigkeit entrichten,
Die Ehrfurcht heisst mich hier aus reinem Herzen dichten,
So schlecht es aber ist, so gut ist es gemeint.
Gott, der die Zeit erneut, erneue auch Ihr Glück,
Und kröne Sie dies Jahr mit stetem Wohlergehn;
Ihr Wohlsein müsse lang so fest wie Cedern stehen,
Ihr Tun begleite stets ein günstiges Geschick;
Ihr Haus sei, wie bisher, des Segens Sammelplatz
Und lasse Sie noch spät Möninens Ruder führen,
Gesundheit müsse Sie bis an Ihr Ende zieren,
Denn diese ist gewiss der allergrösste Schatz.

II

Erhabne Grossmama! Des Jahres erster Tag
Erweckt in meiner Brust ein zärtliches Empfinden
Und heisst mich ebenfalls Sie jetzo anzubinden
Mit Versen, die vielleicht kein Kenner lesen mag;
Indessen hören Sie die schlechten Zeilen an,
Indem sie, wie mein Wunsch, aus wahrer Liebe fliessen.
Der Segen müsse sich heut über Sie ergiessen,
Der Höchste schütze Sie, wie er bisher getan,
Er wolle Ihnen stets, was Sie sich wünschen, geben,
Und lasse Sie noch oft ein neues Jahr erleben.
Dies sind die Erstlinge, die Sie anheut empfangen,
Die Feder wird hinfort mehr Fertigkeit erlangen.

23. The Frankfort city library purchased the book of exercises from an unknown man in Jan., 1846. Soon afterward Weismann published parts of it. It contains a collection of corrected copies from Jan., 1757, to Jan., 1759. On the top cover is written, apparently in Goethe's own hand, *Labores Juveniles*. By turning over the leaves of the book one gets a clear idea of how thoroughly all instruction in Lutheran Frankfort was permeated with the Bible and religion. Among the Bible verses chosen for Goethe's practice in penmanship is the following, not included in Weismann's publication: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I have been known." One versed in Goethe will be reminded of many things, *e. g.*, of Goethe's statement to Kestner that he always expresses himself figuratively, etc. (*cf.* above, p. 158). Veit Valentin in the 38th volume of the Weimar edition (p. 200 *ff.*) has established more accurately the order of the pieces, which were bound together wrongly.

24. Max Herrmann (*Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern*, p. 36)

considers these verses the property of some one else, because Goethe put them in quotation marks. I consider them a quotation from himself, to which the versified postscript, "Es hat der Autor, wenn er schreibt, So etwas Gewisses, das ihn treibt," etc., forms a fine, roguish, marginal note, whereas, considered as an addition to a quotation from some one else, it surely is, as Herrmann says, "somewhat meaningless."

25. Leipsic was smaller than Frankfort,—not larger by 3000 inhabitants, as Loeper's note to *H.*, xxi., 30 says. He doubtless based his statement on the *Gothaische Hofkalender*, which—perhaps only by an oversight in proof-reading—gives the population up to the end of the seventies as 36,000, but for 1782 the corrected number of 26,000 (1785, 29,000, etc.). Leonhardi, *Beschreibung der Stadt Leipzig* (Leipzig, 1799), a reliable authority, estimates the population for 1763 at 28,352; according to the figures which Reichard, editor of the *Gothaische Kalender*, received, this is apparently still too high. Director of the Archives Wustmann kindly informs me that there are no real census reports of that time. The figures are all arrived at indirectly, by means of calculations based on the number of births, deaths, and other well-known factors.

26. These words are taken from a review in the *Frankfurter Gel. Anz.*, Feb. 21, 1772. Merck claimed the review as his own (*Merckbriefe*, iii., 54), but there can be no doubt that these words were inserted by Goethe, who even included the whole review among his works.

27. The only exception was Domenico Feti, of whom Goethe was very fond because of his realistic portrayal of biblical scenes. His admiration for this relatively unimportant artist brought upon him the ridicule of Herder in Strasburg.

28. "What is beauty? It is not light, nor is it darkness. Twilight." *Br.*, i., 190. "Beauty appears to us as a dream. It is a brilliant, swimming shadow-picture, whose outlines no definition can catch." *Br.*, i., 238. "The ancients," said Goethe about a year after his Leipsic sojourn, in his *Tagesheften* (*Ephemerides*, p. 10), "shunned not so much the ugly as the false." "This to me is another proof that the excellence of the ancients is to be sought elsewhere than in their portrayal of beauty." For further material on his critical standards, as opposed to *Laokoon*, see *Br.*, i., 199, 205.

29. It is probably a mere accident that Goethe did not mention *Die Hamburgische Dramaturgie* among the works that influenced him in his Leipsic period. For in two different preliminary outlines for that part of *DW.* (*W.* xxvi., 356, xxvii., 387) it is mentioned. Another circumstance would seem to point to his having studied it in Leipsic. He read a translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, without gaining any understanding of the meaning of the work, however (*Br.*, xii., 117). The reading can hardly have been prompted by anything else than by *Die Hamburgische Dramaturgie*.

30. That *Die Laune des Verliebten* had originated in Frankfort and was called *Amine* in the first version has been questioned by F. Roetteken (*Vjschr.* iii., 184 *ff.*), but without sufficient grounds, as it seems to me. When in the letter of May 15, 1767, Goethe speaks of *Amine* and of *Die Laune des Verliebten*, without pointing out any connection between them,

this is characteristic of the secrecy affected by all young authors, especially by young Goethe. But, both in this letter and in the one of Oct. 12th, he offers the *Laune* to replace *Amine*. This would certainly lead one to conclude rather that it was an improved version of it than that it was something entirely different. Further evidence is the similarity of the names of the heroines, and the fact that Goethe states very definitely that *Die Laune des Verliebten* in its first version originated in the spring of 1765 (*H.*, xxviii., 723). This makes it rather certain that the play originated in Frankfort, but I think it also establishes the identity with *Amine*. The first performance of the play took place on the ducal amateur stage in Ettersburg, May 20, 1779. As in all his own dramas which he helped to stage, Goethe played the part in which he had copied himself (Eridon). The first public performance was in Weimar, in March, 1805; the first printed edition in 1806. Only one manuscript, the one prepared for the performance of 1805, is still in existence. It is in the G. u. Sch. Arch. It differs from the first printed text only in unessential matters.

31. With no poet is it necessary to make a sharper distinction between origin, first, and last written versions than in the case of Goethe. He was able to carry a thing about in his mind for years without writing it down, and, again, there was a long stretch between the first and last written versions of his works. To be sure, the two oldest manuscripts of *Die Mitschuldigen* go back to the year 1769, and some of the allusions would not have been possible before that year. But to conclude from this, as Weissenfels (*Goethe im Strum und Drang*, pp. 107 and 448) does, that the play did not originate till then, that is to say, that it did originate in Frankfort, is absolutely unjustifiable, in view of the repeated and definite testimony of Goethe's own words (*W.*, xxvii., 113, 216; xxvi., 356; xxvii., 387, 395; xxxv., 4; Letter to Rochlitz, July 27, 1807: "*Die Mitschuldigen*, which I wrote in Leipsic almost forty years ago"), which have recently found a noteworthy corroboration in *Annette*. The manuscripts of the year 1769 are nothing but later redactions. The older manuscript, in which the first act is lacking, probably owes its shorter version to the merely accidental circumstance that somebody asked Goethe for a copy of the play while he was busy recasting the exposition, and the poet, being dissatisfied with the old version and not having finished with the new one and being at the same time undesirous of putting into strange hands something that he himself had rejected, simply cut out the first act. That the piece which he brought with him from Leipsic already had an exposition the poet tells us expressly when he says that he rewrote the exposition in Frankfort. Furthermore it is not easy to see how young Goethe should have hit upon the idea of rushing right into the middle of things and making the situation so difficult for reader and hearer to understand, as would be the case if the first act were left out. Of the manuscripts of the year 1769, the shortened one is owned by a private individual in Dresden, the complete one, at one time in the possession of Friederike Brion, is in the library of the University of Leipsic. Beside these there are two other manuscripts, originally agreeing in all particulars, probably written in the year 1783, in the G. u. Sch. Arch. One of them Goethe revised for the printed text of 1787, and erased from it more than from the other those

parts which were characteristic only of his youthful mind. The play was first performed in Weimar on the amateur stage in 1776 (Goethe played Alcest), but not until 1805 on the public stage.

32. *Annette* is that collection of poems which Behrisch copied with great skill in order to keep his young friend from publishing them. The manuscript, the existence of which could no longer be counted on, was found among the papers of Fräulein von Göchhausen and in 1894 passed into the possession of the G. u. Sch. Arch. It confirms the description which Goethe gives of it in *DW*. The collection which is now printed in the 37th volume of the Weimar Goethe is entitled *Annette* in honour of Kätchen Schönkopf (*Cf.* above, pp. 53 and 56). Beside a poem of dedication and an epilogue it contains eleven longer and six shorter poems, the latter of an epigrammatic character. Of the whole collection only the epigram, *Das Schreyen*, borrowed from the Italian, was included by Goethe in the *Liederbuch* of 1769, and even this was later rejected, and only the *Ode an Herrn Professor Zachariä*, which had already been published in the *Leipziger Musenalmanach* of 1777, was given a place among his lyric poems, while of the twenty *Neue Lieder* he in the course of time considered eleven worthy of the honour of appearing among his works.

33. Of the *Neue Lieder* some were not composed until after his return home. They are: *Neujahrslied*, *Zueignung*, *Die Reliquie* (1815, *Lebendiges Andenken*), *An den Mond* (1815, called *An Luna* to distinguish it from *Füllest wieder Busch und Tal*, and doubtless also in order to characterise it as belonging to a style which he had outgrown), and probably also *Das Glück der Liebe* (1815, *Glück der Entfernung*). One notices in them a certain amount of liberation from the influence of his Leipsic friends. For their influence was not only indirect, in that Goethe thought of them as his public; it was also direct. "Le grand conseil s'assembla, où furent lues toutes les poésies qui sortirent de ma plume depuis que je rôde autour de la douce Pleisse. Conclu fut que le tout serait condamné à l'obscurité éternelle de mon coffre hormis douze pièces" (to his sister, August, 1767). What they selected formed the little booklet *Annette*. It is characteristic of his friends' taste, to which they were subjected, that neither this collection nor the *Neue Lieder* of 1769 contained that particular poem which the author sketched in the 7th book of *DW*., xxvii., 103, and which, if it were preserved, we should probably consider the crown of his Leipsic lyrics. Goethe says of the poem that he was never able to read it without admiring it, nor recite it to others without being moved. This is easy to comprehend, for even the prose sketch is possessed of a high poetic charm.

34. Adolf Schöll (*Briefe und Aufsätze von Goethe*, 1766–1786, p. 20 *ff.*) published in 1846 two letters which he found in one of young Goethe's note-books and attributed them to his Leipsic period. One of them (*Arianne an Wetty*) he considered a fragment of an epistolary novel. But Erich Schmidt (Scherer, *Aus Goethes Frühzeit*, p. 1 *ff.*) and Minor (Minor und Sauer, *Studien zur Goethephil.*, p. 82) have brought forward good reasons for believing that the letter "*An eine Freundin*" cannot have been written before 1769 and the other (*Arianne an Wetty*) not before Goethe's meeting with Herder. Both are probably either imaginary, or old letters recast, and if they did not originate in Leipsic, they

are, as I think, continuations of an epistolary novel begun in Leipsic. Goethe says that he based his compositions written for Gellert's Praktikum on "leidenschaftliche Gegenstände," which must mean love affairs. Now the two letters unquestionably deal with his and Horn's Leipsic liaisons, and must, accordingly, have some connection with the compositions handed in to Gellert. After the first labours of an attempt to write the continuation in Strasburg his interest in the completion of the novel must of necessity have flagged, partly because of his change of taste, and partly because of the springing up of his new love passion for Friederike. Nevertheless he preserved a certain fondness for the fragment and gave it to Lavater to read in July, 1774 (*GJ.*, xx., 268). Lavater calls the composition an "Aufsatz"; *Arianne an Wetty*. The designation "Aufsatz" supports the view that the epistolary novel had been begun as a composition for Gellert's Praktikum. Lavater in calling it an "Aufsatz" has certainly preserved the title as it appeared in Goethe's copy-book.

35. Reich, *W.*, xxvii., 299; teuer, xxvii., 328; schön, xxvii., 229 (9 and 26), 230; heiter, fruchtbar, fröhlich, xxvii., 340; herrlich, fruchtbar, xxvii., 330; herrlich, xxvii., 324; xxviii., 30, 79, 84; paradiesisch, xxvii., 327; xxviii., 45; neues Paradies, xxvii., 230.

36. Gesellschaft der schönen Wissenschaften. Kochendörffer, in an article (*Pr. Jahrb.*, lxvi., 554 *ff.*, and lxvii., 316 *ff.*), with the spirit of which I am very much in sympathy, has questioned Salzmann's and Goethe's membership in the society, indeed the very existence of the society, maintaining that it was identical with the Société de Philosophie et de Belles-Lettres, founded in 1767. This assertion is very difficult to support. The Société changed its name to Académie in 1768, at the same time assuming a character to correspond to the change of name, by dividing itself into four classes. Its transactions were conducted in French (Fritz, *Leben Blessigs*, p. 8 *f.*). Consequently the Gesellschaft der schönen Wissenschaften can neither in name nor in character be considered identical with that Académie. Such people as Lenz and Jung-Stilling, who at that time were aglow with German patriotism, could not have joined such a society, much less delivered addresses at its meetings. Accordingly the German society founded by Lenz in 1775 was not, as Kochendörffer says, a continuation of the French organisation, but the latter continued to exist, as is shown by a letter from Lenz to Haffner (Froitzheim, *Zu Strassburgs Sturm- und Drangperiode*, p. 54). The historical sources, on the other hand, establish the separate existence of a Gesellschaft der schönen Wissenschaften, of which Actuary Salzmann, Goethe, Lenz, and Jung-Stilling were members. What Kochendörffer has to say specifically against Goethe's membership is lacking in convincing power. That Goethe on Jung's return knew nothing of the latter's marriage, nor of the congratulations of the society is easily explained, for during the time between Jung's departure and his return Goethe had been in Sesenheim. The sentence referring to the Shakespeare day in Goethe's letter of Sept. 21, 1771, to Roederer, seems to me to speak in favour of Goethe's membership, rather than against it. Kochendörffer's objections to Froitzheim's view are, in my opinion, easily met. The theatre had often been the subject of discussion in the society, and Goethe, carry-

ing out suggestions received from Herder was doubtless often the chief contributor. Out of these discussions and some additions of his own Lenz then distilled his article, which was probably never read, not even after Goethe's departure. Hence Goethe must have been not a little astonished that Lenz, although his material was essentially nothing but a reproduction of Goethe's and Herder's ideas, was nevertheless vain and dishonest enough to leave the impression with the public, by means of a prefatory remark, that he was not indebted to Goethe and Herder, but that, on the contrary, they were indebted to him for their ideas on the theatre. Thus interpreted, the passages in *DW.* which Froitzheim wishes to use as evidence against Goethe are easily understood. There is absolutely no contradiction in them, for Goethe in the first passage says nothing whatever of a reading of Lenz's essay.

37. I see no reason for considering the story of the dancing master's daughters a pure invention of the poet for artistic purposes. Such a thing would have been wholly foreign to his purpose in writing his autobiography. There is in general too much artistic purpose discovered (?) in *DW.* I have pointed out, for example, in the introduction to the chapter on Friederike the various stages of the preparation for the Idyll. But I do not believe that it is arranged with calculating art. I consider it rather the product of the solemn feeling of love, which came over the poet when his memory touched upon the Friederike episode, and of his hesitation to begin immediately the description of the painful, yet beautiful relation. Kräuter's report of the dictation of that section should be remembered in this connection.

38. The letter to Friederike is preserved only in the rough draught. In this the beginning, from "Dear new friend" to "who hold you so dear," is enclosed in parentheses, so that we may assume that the copy which he sent to Friederike began with "Dear, dear friend." Nevertheless I did not wish to suppress the first beginning, as it gives us a good idea of Goethe's manner and of the situation.

39. Goethe dedicated a great many songs to Friederike. He says in *DW.* (xxviii., 31): "they would have made a neat little volume." Only a few of them are found among his works. But some of them were preserved among Friederike's papers which Heinrich Kruse found at Sophie Brion's in 1835, among them the song quoted on pp. 127–128. Sophie asserted that all the eleven songs in her possession were by Goethe. But the opinion has gradually become general that one or more of them were written by Lenz, who after Goethe's departure sought to win Friederike's favour. In vol. xii. of the *G J.* (1891), I have ascribed five songs to Lenz. A great many objections have been raised to this view, the effort being made to retain at least two of them as Goethe's. [*Cf.* the excellent article, "The Authenticity of Goethe's Sesenheim Songs," by J. Goebel, in *Modern Philology*, i., 159 *ff.*—C.]

40. In my characterisation of Merck I have in the main followed Goethe's description of him. This has often been condemned by Merck's followers as partisan and unjust. But the deeper one delves into the existing sources the more one recognises how apt the picture is which Goethe has drawn of him. For certainly nothing could have been farther

from his intention than to do an injustice to his former friend who clung to him so loyally. In corroboration of Goethe's characterisation I may here refer to a remark by Varnhagen which has received but little attention. He says in his *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 2nd ed., iv., 477 *f.*: "From what we know from other sources we have no reason to doubt that the description which Goethe has given of him is in all its features and colours thoroughly correct. . . . Furthermore his personal appearance has been described to us by persons who knew him exactly as they are in that characterisation."

41. The only trace which Dr. Goecke, keeper of the state archives, has been able to find of Goethe's activity at the Imperial Chamber in Wetzlar is the entry of his name in his own handwriting in the original record of the practitioners (*Verhandl. der Giessener Philologenvers.*, 1885, p. 284).

42. In 1802 Goethe's mother gave a somewhat different account of the origin of the play. The differences, which are of no great importance, may be explained in a variety of ways. The important thing is that we hear also from his mother's lips that he did not have the least thought of the theatre, but wished only to dramatise the biography of Götz.—From the words of his letter to Salzmann of Nov. 28, 1771, in which the poet speaks of his work on *Götz* as "a wholly unexpected passion," the conclusion has been drawn that Goethe—contrary to his assertion in *DW.*—had not yet occupied his mind with *Götz* while in Strasburg. This is not a necessary conclusion. In Strasburg he had a certain predilection for the dramatisation of the material, but the undertaking did not become a passion, and that an unexpected one, with him till the idea of the Weislingen-drama flashed through his mind, and, at the same time, the possibility of making the drama a means of liberating himself from his heart-pangs on account of Friederike. Finally, the external reasons which John S. Nollen (*Goethes Götz auf der Bühne*, Leipsic, 1893) has brought forward in favour of the Frankfort origin of the drama do not seem to me a strong enough basis on which to accuse Goethe of an error.

43. It is hard to rid one's self of the thought that Adelheid is drawn from a living model. I believe we may think of the uncommonly beautiful Henriette von Waldner, later Frau von Oberkirch, as the model, who in 1770–1771 was between sixteen and seventeen years old, and may in some way have met the poet in Strasburg. Adelheid's name, von Walldorf, also reminds one of her.

44. That the poet had Martin Luther in mind in this character has always been supposed. It has now become a certainty since the publication of an album leaf on which Merck wrote (Apr. 26, 1773) the words of the brother: "What is not burdensome in this world? and I consider nothing more burdensome than not to be permitted to be a man," with the added remark: "Martin Luther in the drama, *Götz von Berlichingen.*" (Cf., *Ber. d. FDH., N. F.*, xi., 428).

45. That the poetic epistle to Merck, from which the concluding verses are here quoted, refers to *Götz* must not be doubted because of the introductory lines, which are so hard to interpret. The second part of the poem leaves no further doubt whatever. When Goethe in the beginning

speaks of the "new child in the old dress," the second redaction may already have seemed to him a return to the old dress, and nevertheless he may have remained conscious of the revolutionary character of the drama. If it is correct to refer these words to the second version, the verses belong to the spring of 1773. The date which they bear in the Weimar edition, Dec., 1771, is wrong in any case, as Goethe did not become acquainted with Merck until the end of Dec., 1771 (*Aus Herders Nachlass*, iii., 169).

46. The performance in Berlin, Apr. 12, 1774, was the first in Germany (for further details see R. M. Werner in *GJ.*, ii., 87 *ff.*). Then followed Hamburg, Oct. 24, 1774; Breslau, Feb. 17, 1775; Leipsic, perhaps in the same year; Frankfort a. M., 1778; Vienna (Kärtnertortheater), 1783; Mannheim, 1786. It was not put on the stage in Weimar till Sept. 22, 1804. Goethe recast the play for this performance. But as it required almost six hours in the new form he undertook to prepare a new, shorter version, which was performed Dec. 8, 1804, and was later incorporated among his works, remaining ever since the standard for most German theatres. The poet, however, did not like the shortened version very well, because it sacrificed too much of the original form. Accordingly he made a remarkable attempt to divide the longer version for the theatre into two parts, the first of which he called *Adelbert von Weislingen*, the second *Götz von Berlichingen*, thus putting an external seal upon the internal disunity of the piece. Thus divided, the play was first performed on the 23rd and 26th of Dec., 1809. Later (1819) he prepared a new version of the divided play for the stage. (On the Hamburg performance *cf.* Winter und Kilian, *Zur Bühnengeschichte des Götz;* on the Vienna production *cf. GJ.* xix., 293 and xx., 264. For a comprehensive statement, with much that is new, see John S. Nollen, *Goethes Götz auf der Bühne*. On the first redaction for the theatre see Brahm in *GJ.*, ii., 190; on the redaction of 1819 see *W.*, xiii., II., 248 *ff.*). MANUSCRIPTS AND FIRST EDITIONS. Of the first edition (1771), there is a manuscript in Goethe's own hand in the G. u. Sch. Arch. It was first printed in 1832 in volume xlii. of Goethe's works. The second version (1773) has been preserved only in printed copies. The Goethe-Merck edition was pirated twice that same year. The first redaction for the theatre (Sept., 1804) was first printed in 1879 on the basis of a manuscript, with corrections by the poet, now in the library of the University of Heidelberg. The second (Dec., 1804) appeared in 1832, in volume xlii. of Goethe's works. The variants of the version of 1819 are given in the above-mentioned volume of the Weimar edition.

47. If a report by Sara von Grotthus, *née* Meyer, may be trusted, Lessing later gave up his moralising standpoint and gave himself over without reserve to the enjoyment of the work. She tells that he was indignant at Mendelssohn for taking away *Werther* from her, and that he brought her another copy, remarking: "Some day you will feel what a genius Goethe is, I know. I have always said that I would have given ten years of my life, if I could have added one year to Sterne's life, but Goethe is in some measure a compensation for his loss: I cannot listen to the twaddle about his degrading influence, sentimental revelry, etc.

Miserable fiddle-faddle! Paint nothing but Grandisons for your prudish puppets, lest they should crack to pieces in the heat of passion; but shall one not write at all for men, simply because fools are foolish?" (*GJ.*, xiv., 22).

48. A very fine description of the effects of *Werther* was given by Aug. Wilh. Schlegel in a letter printed in the *Chefs-d'œuvre des Théâtres Étrangers*, German section, iii., 373 to 378 (Paris, 1822 *ff.*). Erich Schmidt has rescued it from this hiding-place and reprinted it in the *Festschr. z. Neuphilologentage*, 1892.

49. Of the first version of *Werther* the only manuscript that has been preserved is two sheets of Goethe's rough draught; they were at one time in the possession of Frau von Stein (for details see A. Schöll, *Briefe und Aufs.*, p. 143 *ff.*); of the second only the printer's copy in the G. u. Sch. Arch. The first edition was printed in two different forms; the second, in 1775, with slight changes, in three different forms. There were furthermore seven pirated editions. The second version, of which the second part especially was recast, appeared in 1787. The variations from the first version are chiefly insertions, the most extensive of which is the story of the peasant's servant in love, who out of jealousy kills his rival. It was intended to raise Werther's suicide to a higher moral level. It seems to me an unnecessary introduction of a strong contrast into the poem.

50. That Anna Sibylla Münch was the titulary wife of Goethe in the spring of 1774 is known only by an oral tradition, which Düntzer heard from a "most reliable" source in Frankfort, and which he communicated to the world for the first time in his *Frauenbilder aus Goethes Jugendzeit* in 1852 (*cf.*, also, *Blätter f. liter. Unterh.*, 1864, p. 349).

51. It is not inconsistent with this fact that his father wrote to Lavater on the 28th of June that Wolfgang was to return home. After Wolfgang had been on the way for six weeks without getting any farther than Switzerland his father may no longer have believed that he had any intention of going to Italy, and he may have considered any further sojourn in Switzerland, for whose rocks and misty lakes he cared nothing whatever, a waste of time and money.

52. Fritz Stolberg wrote from Strasburg to Klopstock: "It [the Rhine] is a glorious river. Yet the very heart within me gave me pain when I saw the conquered shore which now belongs to France. But they will not keep the beautiful country much longer; I hope we shall some day realise our strength" (Hennes, *Aus Friedr. Leop. v. Stolbergs Jugendjahren*, p. 48). And to his sister Katharina: "Whether Goethe will go any further with us, I do not know; on the one hand he has a great mind to go to Italy; on the other hand, his heart is drawing him back to Frankfort" (Janssen, *Friedr. Leop., Graf zu Stolberg*, i., 37).

53. That the friends (with the exception of Lavater, who had also been with the party on the lake) go on together as far as Einsiedeln is proved by a letter from Fritz Stolberg (Janssen, *ibid.*, i., 43).

54. Fritz Stolberg writes on the 20th of June to his sister Katharina: "The sensation of freedom in a free land I feel with all its force." A week later he writes to her: "To him who has a feeling for liberty Switzerland

is as sacred as it is to him who has a feeling for nature." Janssen, i., 45 *f.* In October he writes to Gerstenberg: "All the little democratic cantons are as free as eagles and feel to the full the happiness of their liberty. This liberty fills these lands, where neither corn nor wine grows, with abundance." Farther on: "In the Alpine huts we enjoyed the blessing of a simple, free people. . . . We are eye-witnesses of the blessing of liberty, of the joy, the spirit, the bliss, which it alone can give, and which other nations cannot understand" (*Nord und Süd*, Nov., 1894). Thus wrote the young Count. Only two letters by Goethe from Switzerland have been preserved. In the two there is not a word about Swiss liberty, although in the one from Altdorf he mentions Tell's shooting of the apple. On the contrary, we read in the first part of *Briefe aus der Schweiz*, which Goethe published in 1808 as belonging to *Werther:* "Did you say that the Swiss were free? Those well-to-do citizens in their walled cities, free? Those poor devils free on their cliffs and rocks? . . . They once rid themselves of a tyrant and for a moment could imagine themselves free. Then the dear sun, by a strange regeneration, created out of the carrion of the oppressor a swarm of petty tyrants. Now they go on telling the old tale. One grows tired of hearing that they long ago gained their freedom and have remained free. Now they sit behind their walls, slaves of their customs and laws, old wives' notions, and philistinism, and out there on the rocks it is doubtless worth while to speak of liberty, when during half the year they are held in captivity by the snow like a marmot!"

But do these letters belong to the year 1775? Most of them certainly do. The poet himself in *DW.* (*W.*, xxix., 136) ascribed them—at least in their motives—to this year; furthermore, he characterised them as belonging to the first Swiss journey, by giving them a place in his works before the letters of the second journey; and, in the third place, the circumstance that from that journey not more than two letters have been preserved speaks strongly in favour of it. This is an evidence, as in the case of the Wetzlar letters, that the poet, after his return, asked that his letters be given back to him, for a literary purpose. In all probability it was especially the letters to Johanna Fahlmer (for the time up to his entrance into Switzerland—three weeks—there are four letters to her, for the next six weeks not a single one), Merck, and Cornelia. But the whole trend and feeling of the letters would also indicate that most of them belong to that year. Further proof is furnished by a series of individual characteristics: "The desire to fly" in No. 4 (cf. *Werther*, i., Aug. 18th); "Scratch a little sheet full," in No. 6; terror at the thought of returning, in No. 8, which is entirely out of place in 1779; the complaint against the monsters of civil life and false relations in No. 12; the game of marriage in the same letter; the coldness toward Italian art, the example of the Gothic churches, the agreement with esthetic canons, in the *Falconet* essay of 1775 (*cf.* Walzel, *Anz. f. dtsch. Alt.*, xxiii., 93), Ferdinand's (Fritz Stolberg, I presume) bathing in the open in No. 13. But to this main body Goethe added from the Swiss journey of 1779 the whole ending, from the last paragraph in No. 13 to No. 15, including the study of the nude in Geneva, together with the criticism of the aristocratic socie-

ties, such as only the Geheimerat of later years had frequent occasions to become acquainted with. Goethe has told us his purpose in grouping these letters together. It was to show Werther's development up to the time when the novel begins. This thought probably never occurred to the poet till during the time when the book was being read by everybody, and misunderstandings were springing up like weeds out of the ground—that is to say, in the year 1775. This plan, like many others, was necessarily interrupted by his removal to Weimar. But it returned to the poet's mind again, of necessity, when he undertook the reconstruction of *Werther* in 1783. He doubtless took up his Frankfort papers again and supplemented them with some of the Swiss letters of 1779. After he had provisionally finished the work he probably sent it to Bäbe Schulthess in Zurich, to whom he sent almost all his new creations. In this way among his Swiss friends, that is to say, the Schulthess and Lavater circle, the anger may have been called forth at certain passages, which Goethe tells about in *DW.*, and which, he asserts, hindered him in the continuation of these letters. But more powerful than this reason may have been the consideration that the artistic impression of *Werther* would be marred if he should place these letters at the beginning. At any rate when he made the final revision for the new edition in the summer of 1786 he laid the Swiss letters aside. Until shortly before this time he seems, however, still to have had in mind to add the letters. I should like at least to ascribe to the year 1785, or the spring of 1786, the tenth letter, which corresponds exactly to his feelings at that time and finds its pendant in the letter from Rome of June 8, 1787 (*Br.*, viii., 231, 28 *ff.*), and likewise the short ninth ("Ich habe die Römische Geschichte, etc."). After the Werther letters from Switzerland had been left out of the novel they could celebrate their resurrection only in connection with the description of the journey of 1779. For more than one reason I do not believe in the identity of the "*leidenschaftliche Märchen*" (which he intended to invent in 1796 as an introduction, or a frame, for the letters of travel of 1779, and really began to write) with the Werther letters of travel. But, if one were to accept such an identity, even then a free invention of the letters could not be thought of. Their historical value would remain the same.

55. That Goethe is at the bottom of the figure of Beaumarchais is sufficiently evident from the words of the poet quoted on page 236. Goethe's doubles in Clavigo and Beaumarchais form a very accurate parallel to Weislingen and Götz.

56. No manuscript of *Clavigo* has been preserved. In 1774 there appeared two editions in six different forms, and, furthermore, two pirated editions. In 1775 and 1776 there appeared five more pirated editions. *Clavigo* very soon became a popular repertoire play. It was performed for the first time in Hamburg on the 21st of August, 1774, immediately after its appearance (*Teutscher Merkur*, June, 1775), at the end of September or the beginning of October, in Augsburg, where Beaumarchais happened to be present at the performance His opinion of it was: "L'Allemand avait gâté l'anecdote de mon mémoire en la surchargeant d'un combat et d'un enterrement, additions qui montraient plus de vide

de tête que de talent" (Bettelheim, *Beaumarchais*, p. 335). Poor Goethe! A company of actors played the piece in Nördlingen (and probably elsewhere as well) in 1780, under the title, *Clavigo oder wie innerlicher Schmerz töten kann* (Böhm, *Ludw. Wekhrlin.*, Munich, 1893, p. 169). It appeared on the stage in Weimar in 1792.

57. Only one manuscript of the original version of *Stella*, one written by Philipp Seidel, has been preserved. It was at one time in the possession of Fritz Jacobi, but is now in the Royal Library in Munich. In the revised form the play first appeared in 1816. At the first performance in Weimar, January 15, 1806, it was given with a tragic end varying from that in later times. Fernando shot himself, while Stella remained alive. Frau von Stein's report to her son on this point was that the play with this ending had not been received with applause. "It would have been better if he had let Stella die, for one has no sympathy with the betrayer, Fernando, even if he does shoot himself. But he [Goethe] took great offence at me for finding fault with this." Nevertheless, he took this criticism to heart, as we know. First performance in Berlin, and, probably, in Germany, March 13, 1776.

58. "Nicht freuen wird" is written very plainly in the original letter which the owner, Herr Alexander Meyer-Cohn, of Berlin, kindly permitted me to examine. No other reading is possible. The only other possible reason for a change in the reading would be that it is a mistake in writing. I consider a change superfluous, however (the Weimar edition reads "einst freuen wird").

59. That the *Prometheus* ode was originally intended as a monologue for the drama is a supposition that can hardly be rejected, considering Goethe's own statements. His only mistake was in thinking that the monologue was to open the third act, whereas it was probably intended to introduce the awakening of human life in the second act. As it now stands, the introduction to this great moment is somewhat inadequate and disconnected—sufficient reason for Goethe to attempt a more elaborate and more sustained prelude. But as the attempt contained too many repetitions of thoughts already presented, and motives hitherto employed, he dropped the new monologue, inserting only a few verses of it in the first act (*cf.* the critical apparatus to *Prometheus*, lines 28–30, *G.J.* i., 294, and *W.* xxxix., 436). If the ode were to represent an independent lyric treatment of the dramatic material, Goethe could not easily have forgotten it, seeing that it had been very firmly fixed in his mind since the end of 1783, when Jacobi sent him and Herder his conversation with Lessing. It is also hard to say from what source may have come Goethe's desire to treat again in lyric style a motive to which he had just given very effective dramatic form.

60. Schiller had more of a feeling that he was in a city in Jena, which in 1787 numbered only 4000 inhabitants (*Schillers Briefe*, i., 396). Herder said in 1786: "Desolate Weimar, a miserable compromise between a court city and a village" (*Knebels lit. Nachlass*, ii., 250). "Almost everything [in Weimar] has the poverty-stricken appearance of a dead country town" (Der Reisende in *Geogr.-histor. Beschreibung merkwürdiger Städte und Gegenden*, 1798). Riemer said in 1809: "In our village-town"

(Heitmüller, *Aus dem Goethehause*, p. 145). Mme. de Staël, who was in Weimar in 1803, wrote in 1810: "Weimar, ce n'était point une petite ville, mais un grand château" (*De l'Allemagne*, 2nd ed., i., 133). For a detailed description of Weimar, following chiefly the letters of Seckendorff, see Diezmann's *Weimar-Album*.

61. Fielitz (and, before him, Blume, in the *Chronik des Wiener Goethevereins*, 1890), in a program (Pless, 1893) well worth the reading, declares the reference of the verses to Seckendorff to be incorrect, and says they refer to Knebel, having previously declared that the latter is not meant in the preceding stanza. Let me say in reply that if an author gives such definite and detailed statements as to the persons he has depicted in a poem as Goethe does in this case, we have to correct our fragmentary knowledge collected from letters and other documents to agree with them, and not the other way round. That Eckermann should have misheard Goethe I consider incredible. The name "Seckendorff" was far indeed from his thoughts, and when one person pronounces the name "Wedel" another is not likely to mistake it for "Seckendorff." Furthermore, I consider it extremely improbable that Goethe so confused the names as to mention Seckendorff for the first stanza and Knebel for the second; even Fielitz does not resort to this supposition. But why should Knebel not suit for the first stanza? "Die markige Gestalt aus altem Heldenstamme." Knebel was a very large, stately man. "Aus altem Heldenstamme." It is objected that his father had just been ennobled. But his ancestor, Hans Knebel, had, in 1572, preferred to be burned at the stake in Antwerp rather than renounce his faith (*Knebels lit. Nachl.*, i., vii.). "Er saugt begierig am geliebten Rohr." Knebel was passionately fond of smoking. "Gutmütig trocken weiss er Freud und Lachen im ganzen Zirkel laut zu machen." This is pointed out as being most out of keeping with Knebel's character. He is made out to have been a hypochrondriac, peevish, etc. But are all hypochrondriacs always out of humour? Are there not many who occasionally in society show the best of humour? Fielitz has to admit this of Knebel in his old age, but says that his temperament changed as he grew old. Is it, on the whole, credible that one who was out of humour all the time, or even one who was no more than serious, could have maintained his place in that gay circle of 1776? And why shall we say that the second stanza does not fit Seckendorff? The industrious man in his moments of rest is much more likely to stretch out his legs "ekstatisch faul" than is the habitual idler. Seckendorff may have sung a song of the dance of the spheres just as well as Knebel. This was a very popular subject. The poet who, in the spring of 1779, had printed in the motto to the second part of his *Volkslieder* the verses, "O! heb mich mit sanftem Entzücken Hinauf bis ins Sternenrevier! Lass dort mich in himmlischen Tönen Entschweben dem Erdenverdruss" lets us divine the singer of 1776, who "mit Geistesflug sich in die Höhe schwingt und von dem Tanz der himmelhohen Sphären . . . mit grosser Inbrunst singt." In 1776 Seckendorff was still very congenial to the Duke, and although the latter afterwards had many complaints to make against him, the situation was not so bad, even in 1783, that the mention of his

name in a poetic picture of a situation of the year 1776 could have put the Duke out of sorts, as Fielitz would have us believe. Julius Goebel, in his excellent edition of *Goethe's Poems* [selected] (New York, 1901), also holds fast to the poet's own testimony, despite the objections of Blume and Fielitz.

62. With regard to the ages of the members of the Court of the Muses it may be added that at the time of Goethe's arrival Frau von Stein was 33, Knebel and Seckendorff 31, Bertuch 28, Einsiedel 25, Luise von Göchhausen 23, Countess Werthern 23, Baroness Werthern 18, Wedel, whose birthyear for some unaccountable reason cannot be established, probably also only 18. Corona Schröter, when she came to Weimar to stay (1776), was 25, Frau von Schardt 23, Fritsch, who occupied an isolated position, 44, Görtz, 38.

63. *Cf.* Lenz, *Gedichte*, 199 (Weinhold) and his letter from Weimar: "Afternoons we meet up at the Duke's, who spends most of his evenings, and the ones he counts the most pleasant, with a select company of good people of his Court, who all wear, as we (Wieland, Goethe, and Lenz) do, a special style of dress, and are called by him 'die Weltgeister.' Goethe is our captain" (*ibid.*, 304). The text of the satire here given is that of Düntzer (*Goethes Eintritt in Weimar*, 79), who based it on a careful copy by Burkhardt.

64. Lenz also had, as was only very recently discovered, his special plans with regard to matters economical and political in Weimar. He wished to institute there a fair for French wares in order to attract thither French merchants and manufacturers, to whom he would in turn dispose of the products of the duchy. He begs Goethe to present the project to the Duke. *Cf.* Erich Schmidt's thoroughgoing discussion of Weinhold's *Lenz-Nachlass*, *Lenziana*, *Sitzungsb. d. Kgl. Preuss. Akad. d. Wissenschaften*, 1901, lxi., 1013.

65. That this was originally intended as a dirge for Gluck's niece is the very happy conjecture of Erich Schmidt (*Vjschr.*, i, 27). While Koegel (*Goethes lyr. Dicht. d. ersten Weimar. Jahre*, 24) is unwilling to accept it, because he fails to see any connection with the poet's experiences, I believe that in my presentation above I have shown the connection.

66. F. G. Leonhardi (*Erdbeschreibung der Churfürstlich und Herzoglich Sächsischen Lande*, 2. *Aufl.*, 1790), on the basis of a census of 1786, gives the population of the Principality of Weimar, together with the Districts of Jena and Henneberg, which belonged to it, as 62,360; that of the Principality of Eisenach he estimates at 31,000. The population of Weimar, 6265, of whom 209 were cloth-makers and stocking-knitters; of Eisenach, 8000; of Jena, 4334, with about 600 students.

67. I have taken the figures from Düntzer (*Goethes Tagebücher*, 1776–1786, p. 156), who in turn has them from Burkhardt. Leonhardi, *ibid.*, places the number for 1786 at 350.

68. The results which Goethe accomplished in the reformation of the Duke's financial management can only be partially verified at present, as it is not certain how much of the burden was put on the Chamber before Goethe assumed control of the latter. In reply to my inquiry

Burkhardt gave me the following figures from the records of the public purse: From October 1, 1776, to October 1, 1777, receipts 25,100 thalers, expenditures 25,886; 1781–1782, receipts 23,791, expenditures 26,686; 1782–1783, receipts 28,217, expenditures 30,809; 1783–1784, receipts 23,798, expenditures 24,758; 1784–1785, receipts 27,186, expenditures 33,094. According to these figures the Duke's management showed deficits from the very first. In 1781–1782 the amount was about 3000 thalers. Goethe's first year of financial management reduced the amount to something over 2000 (according to his correspondence with Bertuch it must be assumed that the deficit threatened to be still greater than the previous year), his second to 1000. The third year, on the other hand, it jumps up again to 6000. This was caused by the Duke's long journeys in the autumn of 1784 and the summer of 1785 in the interest of the League of Princes. Otherwise the year would have ended with a surplus. These facts make it abundantly evident why Goethe in the summer of 1785 insisted on limiting the Court table, and at the same time uttered the sigh: "I am patching away at the beggar's mantle which is about to fall from my shoulders." On the 30th of November, 1799, Herder told Böttiger, the director of the Weimar Gymnasium: "While Goethe was still president of the Chamber he laboured to bring it about that a fixed estimate of receipts and expenses might be laid before the Duke, and the Duke then be obliged to give his promise not to exceed this estimate in his demands. But the Duke had little desire to do so, and this made the presidency so distasteful to Goethe that he undertook his journey to Italy in order to get rid of the whole affair" (Böttiger, *Literar. Zuständ. und Zeitgen.*, i, 58).

69. In view of the discretion which a minister must observe in political projects it is natural that Goethe entrusted to paper at most occasional slight hints concerning his far-reaching plans of reform. In his literary works, on the other hand, and especially in *Wilhelm Meister* (*Lehrj.*, vii., 3, and viii., 2), he has expressed himself more openly. Adolf Schöll (*Goethe*, p. 252 *ff.*) has pointed out the importance of these passages, and I have followed him. Apparently Goethe began early to work on his plans of reform. In May, 1779, he made the entry in his diary: "Reduction of taxes, etc. . . . was very busy during this time," in which the "etc." is very suggestive. On his journey to the Harz Mountains, on November 29, 1777: "When will the tithes cease and an epha—" [a princely "Er sagte es" intervene?] An allusion to the vigorous and far-reaching character of his plans and to the bearing of the Duke is found in a letter of November 12, 1781, to Frau von Stein: "For the carrying out of the length and breadth of a long, bold plan the Duke lacks the necessary consequence of ideas and true steadfastness."

70. I surmise that the journey to the Rhine and to Switzerland in the year 1779 was undertaken partly to serve this purpose. It is somewhat striking that Karl August and Goethe visited so many Courts on the return trip.

71. *Cf.* Erdmannsdörffer, *Die politische Korrespondenz Karl Friedrichs von Baden*, 6; Ranke, *Die deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund.*, 2. *Ausg.*, 32*f.* and 69*f.*

72. Goethe's attitude toward the Prussian League of Princes can be pretty clearly recognised in Karl August's remark in July, 1785, to the Prussian agent, Dohm, that he would have given the preference to a league of small states in which there would be no falling out either with the Emperor or with Prussia. Many princes would now hesitate to enter a league which was evidently formed against the Emperor and controlled by the electoral princes (Prussia, Hanover, Saxony) in accordance with their individual interests. The allies, he feared, would become embroiled in Prussia's wars which did not concern the Empire. . . . He confidentially expressed further his regret that the feelings and interests of the small states were either unknown or disregarded in Berlin (*cf.* the comprehensive discussion by Bailleu in the *Histor. Zeitschr.*, lxxiii., 19). As Goethe and the Prussian privy councillor, Boehmer, were executing the document of Weimar's entrance into the League the poet took great pains to see to it that the Duke's dignity and titles were in no wise prejudiced. It was signed August 29, 1785.

73. After all, this must be said in his praise. Frederick the Great's earlier attempts had all been temporary expedients. So were likewise those made by Georg Ludwig von Edelsheim by order of the King in the spring of 1778. They were immediately given up when Austria inclined toward peace. Neither was Prussia willing, at the time of the formation of the League of Princes, to undertake any reform of the Empire, which, however, aside from the security of the small states, was Goethe's chief aim. Concerning Karl August's proposals of reform we read the very cool remark in a Prussian memorandum: "Dans le traité d'union les confédérés ne sont pas tant engagés à améliorer et à réformer la constitution germanique, qu'à maintenir l'ancienne et véritable constitution de l'Empire contre le despotisme et les usurpations" (Bailleu, *ibid.*).

74. The only manuscripts in existence are of the last redaction. The one in Goethe's own hand, finished in Rome, September 5, 1787, is in the Royal Library in Berlin; the other, prepared for the printer by a copyist, is in the G. u. Sch. Arch. *Egmont* appeared in print at Easter, 1788. The play was first performed March 31, 1791, in Weimar, and met with little success. When Goethe himself had assumed the direction of the theatre he persuaded Schiller to revise the drama, and Schiller "proceeded cruelly." In this form it was given in April, 1796, and received with applause. Most theatres followed Schiller's revision with few modifications. The first performance in Berlin was in 1801.

75. Goethe lived in the "Queen of England," now called "Hotel Victoria." It is situated in the interior of the city, near St. Mark's Square (cf. *Chronik des Wiener Goethevereins*, i., no. 2). According to the *Gothaische Hofkalender*, Venice had 149,000 inhabitants in 1786; Florence had 81,000; Rome, 162,800; Naples, 380,900; Palermo, 120,000; Milan, 120,000. Of the German cities that Goethe had seen none of them except Berlin numbered over 50,000. If one further takes into consideration the fact that the low land in Italy was much more densely populated than in Germany, that outside the gates and on the estates of the nobility there had been erected numerous artistically beautiful villas, whereas in Germany the cities ended with the fortifications, and

the nobility lived outside in menacing old castles or barrack-like more recent houses, it can also be understood why Italy could not but make such a free, animated, cheerful, and attractive impression on Goethe.

76. In those days the Assunta was still in the Frari; in San Giovanni was the murder of Peter the Martyr. Goethe merely makes casual mention of the angels in this picture (*H.*, xxiv., 80). That he is silent with regard to Verrocchio's magnificent equestrian statue of Colleoni may be explained, on the other hand, in another way. It is because he always ignored Christian plastic art, which to his mind was always eclipsed by the antique.

77. Goethe's position with reference to the Gothic. *Faust*, 6412: "Give me slender buttresses with a striving upward to the infinite," is ironical in Goethe's mouth. In the passage "multiplication of the small," etc. (*H.*, xxiv., 517), he explains the origin of the Gothic from the shrines of saints and similar works of wood-carving. "They fastened their finical ornaments, mouldings, and brackets to the outside of the walls in the north, and thought in this way to ornament gables and shapeless towers." The outburst of anger in Venice was not inserted in the *Italienische Reise* till later, but is certainly based on a clear remembrance of what he there felt and thought on seeing the fragment of an antique entablature. This view is further supported by the fact that he made the insertion in spite of his having promised Boisserée to leave it out (Boisserée, i., 264). Schinkel, the greatest architect of the nineteenth century, went through the same course of development away from the Gothic to the antique.

78. In Bologna Goethe also went into raptures over a Saint Agatha which was considered to be the work of Raphael. He would not let his Iphigenia say anything that this saint could not also have said. The picture has vanished without a trace, but this much is certain, that it was not the work of Raphael.

79. "In my room I already have the most beautiful bust of Jupiter ["A colossal head of Jupiter is standing in my room," *Br.*, viii., 101], a colossal Juno, great and glorious beyond all expression" (*Br.*, viii., 135). Concerning the Juno see, further, *Br.*, viii., 117 and 149. According to this the colossal heads which he mentions in *Br.*, viii., 75, together with the Pantheon, Apollo Belvedere, and the Sistine Chapel, as those works beside which he sees almost nothing else, must surely be these, and not, as Erich Schmidt thinks (*Schr. d. Goethegesellsch.*, ii., 440), Antinoüs and Faustina; these two busts, which were in Frascati, in the Villa Mondragone, and not in Rome, he seems to have seen for the first time in December, 1787. On this visit the Faustina makes such a slight impression on him that he makes no mention of it at all (*H.*, xxiv., 447).

80. It is probable, but not certain, that Goethe was also in Sorrento, Tasso's native city (cf. *Schriften der Goethegesellschaft*, v., 73). But, on the other hand, it is probable that he did not visit Capri. To what a limited degree these two points were then fashionable as resorts is shown by the remarks of his guide, Volkmann (*Historisch-kritische Nachrichten von Italien*, iii., 332), who in spite of his usual copiousness, knows of nothing else to say of Sorrento than that its inhabitants mostly support

themselves by the fattening of calves for the Neapolitan market, and of Capri that the island is known by the debauches of Tiberius. So far as I know, Capri has been a general resort for tourists only since the discovery of the Grotta Azzurra.

81. After the correct surmises of Adolf Stern in No. 51 of the *Grenzboten* for 1890, the name, age, and further fate of the Milanese beauty have been established beyond all doubt by Antonio Valeri (pseudonym Carletta) in the *Vita Italiana*, iii., 129–139 (January, 1897), and in his *Goethe a Roma* (Rome, 1899). Maddalena, according to him, was born November 29, 1765, which would make her about twenty-two years of age when Goethe made her acquaintance. Very soon after Goethe's departure she was betrothed and married to the son of the famous etcher, Volpato, who belonged to Angelika Kaufmann's circle. Angelika painted a portrait of her as Signora Volpato, and Valeri has found the painting. It is now in Berlin in the possession of Dr. Werner Weisbach. A look at it is enough to make one consider Goethe justified in being taken with the beautiful Maddalena. How firmly her image was fixed in his memory is shown by the description of her in the *Ital. Reise*, which, though not written down till forty years after (1829), corresponds exactly with the picture. Maddalena did not live to see the appearance of the part concerning her. She died in 1825.

82. In my opinion the chief figure in the elegies is Faustina of Rome, and not Christiana. The poems may have been conceived, partly in Rome and partly on the return journey. His relation to Christiana merely gave Goethe "the courage and disposition to elaborate them (with the addition of some Thuringian elements) and redact them" (*W.* xxxvi., 14),—nothing more. The poet was accordingly perfectly justified in writing on the manuscript, "Rome, 1788." (cf. *Br.*, viii., 347, 7).

83. In Constanz, on his homeward journey, Goethe even gives utterance to the important statement that he was "absolutely happy" in Rome. Carolina Herder reports him as having said that "for a fortnight before his departure he had every day wept like a child" (Herder's *Reise nach Italien*, 4).

84. Herder, on his arrival in Rome six months after Goethe's departure, writes to him: "It is impossible to describe how much your friends here all love you"; and to Carolina: "Everybody who knew him here admires and loves him." "Halbgott" (demigod), *H.*, xxiv., 286.

85. In anticipation of the approaching "ganz Werden" (attainment of complete harmony of his nature), he writes to Frau von Stein, under the date of June 8, 1787: "Furthermore, I have become acquainted with happy people, who are happy only because their natures are completely harmonious; even the least man, if his nature is harmonious, can be happy and can in his own way be perfect; this I also will and must now achieve, and I can; at least I know wherein it lies, and what are the conditions; I have learned to know myself on this journey more than I can tell" (*Br.*, viii., 232).

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